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THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER.

VOL. III.

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Maggie

THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER.

BY

ANNE BEALE,

AUTHOR OF

"FAY ARLINGTON," "THE PENNANT FAMILY,"
"SIMPLICITY AND FASCINATION,"
&c., &c.

"O my love's like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June:
O my love's like the melodie
That's sweetly play'd in tune.
As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in love am I:
And I will love thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry."

BURNS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE BRIDGE BY MOONLIGHT.

AS may be supposed, the visit of Miss Martha and Janey to Sandport bore no fruit. Miss Martha shopped, and her niece gazed about her in all directions in the hope of seeing Mark. In vain—neither he nor Dangerfield had been heard of. But the frost struck into Janey's delicate frame, and while she gazed and waited she seemed to grow paler and paler, if that were possible.

She was standing at a shop door while Miss Martha was making a purchase, when she spied Mr. Gay, Solomon Hasluck, and Firman. She ran towards them, regardless of appearances, and asked, breathlessly, if they had seen her husband. Miss Martha soon joined them, and, to avoid publicity, Firman proposed that they should walk to the pier. The three men had only just met, and neither knew exactly what the other was after, but the extreme gravity of Mr. Gay and the obstinate silence of Solomon were apparent. Miss Martha was about to refuse to go, when Janey entreated her to consent, and they all went together to the pier. Hence they saw the disabled *Sea Serpent;* and here, in a quiet nook, the miller disburdened himself of the weight that was on his soul. The sea was dashing up the sides of the pier, and poor Janey

shivered and shuddered with the cold and terror as she thought of Mark.

"We are all friends," began Mr. Gay; "that is to say we have been friends. Here, in sight of that ship which has been my boy's ruin, I will pay his debts, and free his path for more honest dealing in future, God willing. Solomon Hasluck, here are your bills and a cheque to pay them. My credit is good at present. Go to the bank straight and get your money while it is good." He handed Solomon the packet of papers, which he took sullenly. "Lieutenant Firman, I hear my man Levi Tuck is taken up for smuggling. I will go bail for him. The magistrates will take my bail to-day, if not to-morrow. To-morrow I shall be glad if you will come to Beachton Mill, with your men, and have a search, for I am told, but I don't believe it, that smuggled

goods have been hidden on my premises. If so be they are found there I hold myself responsible; and what I say now to you I mean to say to Squire Worthington. You must be prepared to break the ice and drag the pond. I put myself in my son's place, even if I have to go to prison for it. He has run away from his punishment, and I take it on my back. Nobody shall say that Martin Gay tried to elude justice."

"Hoity, toity! what a row about nothing!" exclaimed Miss Martha, while Janey uttered a little scream. "Come along, Janey, I'm not going to listen to such nonsense."

But Janey did not stir. The cold and the terror seemed to have rooted her there.

"I will attend to all you wish, sir," said Firman. "But I hope what you say is a mistake. Let me help her, Miss Hasluck.

The cold has been too severe for her. I wish Rushy were here."

Firman put his arm round Janey's waist, and whispered to her that Mark was safe—had not Rushy told her?—quite safe, only absent for a time. The poor child moved half unconsciously, and let him support her to the very inn where Mark and Dangerfield had met not long before her marriage. It was not far from the spot where they had been standing, and she was soon by the fire in the small private room, reviving under the influence of warmth. Miss Martha began to perceive that Janey's delicacy might be constitutional, and was as fussy and as anxious now as she had been indifferent heretofore.

"Fetch a fly. She mustn't go home in the pony-chaise," she said, and Firman hurried off to order one, bewildered by all his complications.

Solomon had disappeared, and Mr. Gay and Miss Martha remained with Janey. She murmured some sort of frightened apology for her weakness, but Mr. Gay stopped it by a tender fatherly kiss, which caused her to cast her arms about his neck, and shed tears, as refreshing to her strained eyes as dew to Summer flowers.

When the fly came, she and Miss Martha got into it. Frank volunteered to drive Dandy home when he and Mr. Gay had finished their business, so the fly drove off with the ladies only, leaving the men in full consultation.

Miss Martha overruled all Janey's entreaties to be allowed to return to The Bluffs, and watch for Mark; but, as soon as they reached the villa, she sent off for Jerusha, who came at once, her eyes still red with her unusual flow of tears; but every-

one was too busy with Janey to notice it. Even Mrs. Firman was roused into energy at sight of the stone-cold, snow-white Janey, and busied herself to help her.

"Has he come home, Rushy?" asked Janey, when Jerusha appeared.

"Not yet, darling; but we are hoping for him every minute. I have left word for him to come straight here," replied Jerusha, while Mrs. Firman looked on.

Janey seemed satisfied, and allowed Jerusha to take off her things, lay her down upon the couch, and give her some hot tea. After this she fell into a sleep, which appeared to be almost a swoon.

"We must have the doctor," said Miss Martha.

"To 'minister to a mind diseased,'" returned Jerusha. "She will be no better till Mark comes."

"Hang Mark!" shouted Miss Martha. "He has been a bother ever since he was born, and will be as long as he lives."

She quitted the room as she spoke, and Jerusha and Mrs. Firman were left alone with the sleeping Janey, who lay almost as one dead.

For the moment Jerusha forgot the new tie which should have drawn them together, and continued to watch Janey, regardless of Mrs. Firman's presence. Not so that lady. Her mind was always occupied with her son, and the late events at the mill had rendered his engagement to Jerusha more obnoxious to her than ever. Still at that moment she could but admire Jerusha, as she sat gazing upon Janey.

"Did you ever see anyone alive so white before?" asked Jerusha, suddenly, turning

her flushed face to Mrs. Firman, and meeting that lady's gaze.

"Never. The usual result of an imprudent marriage," was the quiet reply.

As their eyes met, they understood one another. No more words were spoken between them, and none were needed. Mrs. Firman calmly continued the tiny sock she was knitting, while Jerusha bent again over Janey, and let two scalding tears fall on her white hand. While shedding them, she recalled her father's words concerning the impossible union of Firman and herself.

While she and Mrs. Firman maintained a rigid silence, and Janey still slept, Frank came to the villa with the pony-chaise. He found his mother and Jerusha in this state, and suspected its cause. For the first time in his life he almost rejected his mother's embrace, and glanced at her with a severity

of which she had believed him incapable. Then he said to Jerusha in his tenderest, gentlest tone,

"Rushy, your father wants you. I have promised to bring you home. You had better slip away while your sister sleeps. Some one else will take your place by her."

"I will," said Mrs. Firman, looking at her son reproachfully.

"You are very kind; thank you," said Jerusha, rising, and speaking with a quiet dignity, not lost on Mrs. Firman. "I will run and tell Cousin Martha that I am going, and be back directly."

She disappeared, and finding Miss Martha, told her that she would return and sleep with Janey, if her father could spare her.

"I hope to goodness he will, then, for I can't undertake to manage those two snow-women, and I've no patience with either of

'em," replied Miss Martha. "Mrs. Firman's a fine lady, and Janey's a simpleton, and there isn't a pin to choose between 'em. But don't let their fiddledeeing fancies frighten you out of Frank, for there's heart of oak in him."

"Good-bye, for the present, Cousin Martha," said Jerusha, returning to the parlour.

Mrs. Firman had taken her vacated seat, and had resumed her knitting. Neither she nor her son had spoken during her absence.

"Good night, mother; I must return to Sandport, *viâ* Hollow Cove. My men are waiting for me," said Frank, rising at Rushy's entrance.

"To-night, Frank?" whispered Mrs. Firman, without taking her eyes from her knitting.

"To-night, mother," he replied, bending

over her, and kissing her forehead lightly, if not coldly.

She did not attempt to accompany him into the hall, as she usually did, but, bowing to Jerusha, who said she would return if possible, allowed the young couple to depart without further interference.

Frank looked vexed, but, as he hated injustice, he only sought to mitigate it by being more zealously attentive to Jerusha. She was, however, of too impulsive and candid a nature to brook any misunderstanding. At first she declined his offered arm, but when they were outside the entrance-gate, the frozen snow and ice combined made the path across the fields so slippery, and the bridge so dangerous, that she was obliged to consent to be assisted.

Once more he held her hand as they crossed the little stream beneath the cold

moon, and in the midst of a frost-bound world. The tongue of the babbling brook was well-nigh silenced, and beast and bird had sought shelter from the cold; so they were the only moving things in the white waste, and the Erl-King had not force enough to chill their warm hearts, or stay their restless throbbings. When they were over the bridge, however, Jerusha strove to withdraw her hand, but Frank placed it within his arm, and held it resolutely.

"Have I offended you, Rushy?" he asked. "If so, it has been unintentional. Let there be no secrets between us. You know that we should be now of one mind. Tell me if I have angered you."

"No, no! not you, not you! though your letter seemed strangely short and matter-of-fact," replied Jerusha, vehemently. "But your mother's manner is easy to understand,

and I feel that you have told her, and that she thinks me beneath her and you. I was not so, or I thought I was not, when—when you spoke to me a few days ago—they seem months or years—but now I am. Father says a smuggler's sister must be far removed from one whose duty it is to cast her brother into prison, if only he can find him; and father is right. One week has served to turn the whole current of my life, which seems suddenly frozen, like the mill-pond, or checked like yonder brook. You and I must forget what has so lately passed between us, and try to think that we have never met."

"That may be possible for you, my Rushy, but impossible for me," said Firman, with the decision which was as natural to him as life. "You and I have plighted our faith, with your father's blessing and his

prayers. I have been hasty, perhaps, as men count haste—as my mother would count it—but I hope to be hasty no more. While you remain Jerusha Gay I shall never give you up. Wait as long as you will, say what you will, let every relation you have in the world turn robber, and every friend look coldly upon you, and I should only love you all the better, were that possible. You need not struggle to withdraw from me, for I am stronger than you, dear, and until you tell me that your heart has changed with your fortunes, the strength of my affection will overcome your delicate scruples. I may write short, matter-of-fact letters, and be but a bluff sailor, still I believe in pure, true, eternal love, and that is what I feel for you."

"Thank you, oh, thank you!" said Jerusha, her tears falling beneath the cold

moon, and checked as they rolled down her cheek by the colder frost; "but it must not, it cannot be. My life will now be trebly due to my dear father and to poor Janey, if God spare her. I fear we may be ruined. And, still worse, my brother may be made responsible, not only for his own sins, but those of another—and he may not return home—and—and—I dare not think of the consequences either to my father or Janey."

"Then, my Rushy, if all this happen—which God forbid—there is more reason still for my constancy. I may be compelled, in the path of duty, to do what seems contradictory, but I shall be none the less true to you and your father. I know that my mother, having only me, is jealous of my love, but time and my Jerusha will overcome that. It is hard to part in doubt, but I repeat that nothing you have said, or

can say, will ever turn my love from you."

They had reached the gate, and Firman still held Jerusha's hand. She could not speak for tears, but they spoke for her, and "she looked in his face till her heart was like to break." Roses and dimples had disappeared, and she was no longer the bright "maid of the mill" he had wooed and won but a few evenings before. Still she was all in all to him, and when she hastily snatched her hand from his, and ran through the open gate into the house, he said, as he turned slowly towards Beachton,

"Neither father nor mother, brother nor sister, can separate hearts as true as yours and mine, my Rushy!"

CHAPTER II.

AN ENCOUNTER IN THE CAVE.

FIRMAN spent the night, after his parting with Jerusha, in the smugglers' cave, together with a number of his men. His discovery of the cave had been made known to the authorities, but not to the public at large, so neither smugglers nor fishermen knew that a considerable force of the coastguard was concentrated about Hollow Cove. To avoid suspicion, the valuable cargo left in the cave by the crew of the *Sea Serpent*, and found there by Firman, had not been removed, and a guard

was stationed in case of reprisal. Chivers and his mates had kept in the background ever since Firman's search for Dangerfield, so the cave had been unvisited by any save Preventive men, and by them with all possible secresy. Firman was in command, though his captain was equally on the alert, and his conduct was reckoned so praiseworthy that his promotion was accounted certain.

It was not, however, of promotion that he was thinking, but of Jerusha, as he stood in the cavern's natural embrasure, alternately looking at his men and giving them instructions, and gazing on the moonlight as it flickered on the waves. There was a fire at the extreme end of the cavern, similar to that near which he had found Levi, but it was kept so low and clear that its smoke scarcely reached him. He knew not which scene

was the more picturesque, that without, or the one within. The contrast was great; but he was not only a devotee of Nature, but something of a sketcher; and while pondering over Jerusha's words, his eyes, and through them his mind, received an impression of the grandeur of night and the wildness of the smugglers' cave.

Although the inmates of the latter wore the sober uniform of the coastguard, and not the more varied costume of smugglers, they looked weird and picturesque as they sat or stood about the low fire. Some were half asleep, others feeding the fire from a small store of wood and coal they had discovered, others discoursing. There were about a dozen of them, and all had conceived a respect and admiration of their young chief, not only because he was bold and resolute, but because "he tempered justice

with mercy." They were even then talking of him, and wondering what would be the next move of the smugglers, and how he would meet them should they suddenly appear in the cavern.

As Firman glanced from his men around the said cavern, glittering as it was in the moonlight, he marvelled at the secret, slow, yet perfect work of nature. The roof was hung with gleaming, transparent stalactites, the floor inlaid by burnished stalagmites, the shining result of centuries of her handiwork. A less enduring if not less beautiful specimen of her creative art encircled the window. Here, from every piece of encroaching lichen, hung icicles, purer, brighter, larger than diamonds; and the stonework was adorned by intricate threads of glittering beads of frozen water, so fantastic and so minute that not even the

most delicate of the workers in gems of fairyland could have imitated them. Yet had that industrious framer of geometrical circles and their sextants, the spider, wrought them, and the cold but admiring moon had touched them with her enchantments until they seemed alive with brilliance.

Firman forgot the cold, and the unpleasant duty which had placed him in that strange scene, in contemplating these marvels, and he was lost in wonder at "the vast and the minute" in the Creator's kingdom, even while pondering on things of his own little world.

But he was recalled to the work he had to do himself, from that which he surveyed, by a moving object on the ocean below. It was a small vessel that came stealthily round Hollow Cove Point, and seemed almost to graze the rocks as she sailed warily into the

little bay. Firman guessed that she was a smuggler's craft, venturing after the rich treasure stowed away in the cave. The *Invincible* was, he knew, elsewhere, and so, doubtless, did the smugglers, who were daring enough for anything, and who could not be aware of the present occupation of the cave. He watched the vessel until she was out of sight beneath the cave, then gave the necessary orders to his men. He and they withdrew into the depths of the cavern, and stood prepared for intruders, armed with pistols and cutlasses.

"No shot fired, and no sword drawn, unless they refuse to surrender, and begin the attack," he said, and involuntarily he thought of Mark.

Then there was an intense silence for a few minutes.

This was broken by a voice from outside

the hidden entrance, which said clearly, "All right, come on!"

A short time afterwards a man crept into the cave, followed by four or five others, whom he appeared to be aiding and encouraging up the dangerous and slippery path.

Then the same voice exclaimed, "Well done, watching still! Who is it? Speak, we're friends. S. S."

These were the pass-letters of the crew of the *Sea Serpent* and its allies.

Receiving no answer, the speaker uttered an oath, and made his way down the cave, followed by the others.

Firman and his men advanced cautiously towards them, and arrested them by a call to surrender in the Queen's name. In another moment they were face to face with the smugglers.

Lieutenant Firman met the one who appeared to be the chief; and while the command to surrender was yet on his lips, received a blow from a strong fist, which did not, however, harm him. He was loth to use the sword he held, and, being supported by his men, deemed it unnecessary. But his adversary drew a dagger, which would have been doubtless plunged into him, had not one of his men perceived it, and struck with his cutlass at the sword-arm, which was disabled at once, and the leader thus overpowered, together with his mates, saw that resistance to an armed force more than double their own was useless. There was a short and sharp struggle at first, which ended in the defeat of the gang, who were searched and disarmed.

The encounter was so sudden, and the subsequent struggle so short, that neither

side had time to think of the other. When Firman looked after his especial adversary, whom he took to be the captain, he perceived that he was standing motionless between two coastguardsmen. He was a big, burly man, and this surprised him. Lights had been kindled by this time, and he went towards him, knowing that he was wounded.

"You've hunted me down at last. You've done for me, curse you!" were the words that greeted him, as his late adversary sank down heavily on the rocky floor.

To his amazement, it was Captain Dangerfield.

Firman glanced instinctively at the other prisoners, expecting to see Mark. But he was not amongst them. He was probably waiting with the ship. But what could make the powerful, daring captain succumb

so strangely? Firman looked again, and saw that blood was streaming from the wounded arm, and that he looked not only grim but ghastly.

"Give him some brandy," he said to one of the smugglers. "Let me bind up your arm," to Dangerfield. "It will not be the first I have bandaged."

The brandy was administered, but Firman got no answer from the Captain. Still he did not believe the silence was from weakness, and wondered if it might be a trick, so he slit up his coat-sleeve, and examined the wound, which was deep. He had seen wounds enough on board ship in time of war, and had aided the surgeon, so he knew how to stop the effusion of blood by bandages. He was surprised that Dangerfield should let him bind up his arm with many handkerchiefs, and offer no resistance.

He sat as motionless against the cavern wall as one of his own bales of smuggled goods, and while brandy was poured down his throat, his arm was not only bound up, but placed in a sling, his own men aiding, watched by the coastguard. His eyes were closed and his face set, but as there was no failure of pulse, Firman looked inquiringly at the smugglers, and they returned significant glances.

"He can't bear the sight o' blood. That's his only weakness," whispered one of them, and Firman understood that some fear had subdued this bold man.

It was the fear of death. The weakness was more mental than physical. He had never been disabled before, either by sickness or sword-cut, and had therefore never felt the deathlike sensation of faintness. He was a daring rather than a courageous

man, and he now yielded to a Power superior to his own. It struck Firman, however, that, being overcome at last, he did not care to make any effort, either of body or mind, to rouse himself. His play was played out—his reckless game was brought to an end in the very spot where he believed himself most secure from interruption, and he had no hope beyond.

"Let me alone—let me die. It is my fate," he muttered at last; for this man, like that most potent of freebooters, Napoleon the First, was a fatalist.

"It may be your fate to live a new life, by the grace of God," said Firman. Then, addressing the smugglers, he added, "Is there anything in those bales yonder that will make a bed? If so, let my men cut them open, and prepare one near the fire."

"They're mostly silk goods and the like,"

said a coastguardsman, when he had obeyed orders.

"Make some of them into a pillow, anyhow," said Firman, taking off his coat, and laying it on the stone floor at the end of the cave.

They heaped up a strange medley of shawls and silks, and Firman returned to Dangerfield with the purpose of helping him to this improvised couch. He suddenly started up, with the evident intention of resistance, but seeing blood, and feeling that his right arm was powerless, he sank back, and allowed them almost to carry him to the place prepared for him. The smugglers who were not of his own crew cursed his weakness, and said to one another that he was but a big bully after all. They did not know that he believed himself dying, and that omnipotent Death is, in-

deed, a "King of Terrors" to the evil-doer, and a stern arouser of conscience to all.

When he was laid by the fire, and the smugglers secured from the possibility of escape, Firman gave such orders as he deemed necessary to his men, and sat down beside him to await the dawn. As no more smugglers appeared in the cave, there seemed nothing else to be done.

Dangerfield lay for a long time speechless and motionless; then he said something in a whisper, which Firman heard by bending over him.

"Give my love to Jerusha Gay, and tell her that in obeying her commands I am dying in Mark's stead, for I wouldn't let him come."

"I will; but you are not dying," replied Firman. "You are only weak from loss of blood, and will recover."

"I say I am dying. I knew you were my fate, or I yours. Chance has given you the best throw, and you have done for me. How dark and horrible is death!"

"Only to the impenitent," Firman ventured to say. "Christ died for all that He might enlighten the dark valley, and open the gate of eternal life to every repentant sinner who accepts his atonement."

"You murder, and then preach," growled Dangerfield, but this time without an imprecation. "Is it bleeding still?" he added, with a shudder, after a pause. "It makes me sick and faint."

"No; you shall have a doctor as soon as possible," replied Firman.

"To kill me twice," said the wounded man, ironically. "Once is enough; I never tried it before, and don't want to be murdered again."

Then he relapsed into silence, and Firman fancied he slept; but he was mistaken. His offended and often blasphemed Maker was at His inscrutable work in the soul of the sinner. Thoughts that had never before penetrated to that mysterious spiritual part filled it now, and the misdeeds of a life-time rose, like so many awful ghosts, before its marvellous perception. Perhaps that resistless dread of death was the Almighty's way of rousing to life a soul burdened with guilt—who shall say? But Firman, watching with an intense anxiety, fancied that he heard in a murmur, the repetition of his own words, "Christ died for all—accept His atonement."

And thus the night wore on, while sleep overpowered the senses of the smugglers, as well as some of the coastguard. Firman let them slumber, keeping watch himself;

for his conscience was not quite clear regarding that sleep of his in Chivers's house. He administered brandy to Dangerfield from time to time, who swallowed it without showing any other symptom of consciousness.

"It's mother's milk to him," remarked one of the coastguardsmen. "He sucks it down as nat'ral as a babe, and asks no questions."

"He's paid dear enough for it, and it ought to do something in return," said another. "He's but a chicken-hearted old cock, after all, to let himself lie like that, all for a cut of the arm."

These remarks were, apparently, heard by Dangerfield, for he muttered, "Curse the impertinent rascals," and refused any more brandy.

No sooner did day dawn than Firman

despatched two of his men to reconnoitre, with orders to go to Seagull's Nest, and get some of the fishermen who resided there, to aid them in clearing the way to the cave. Before giving these orders, he himself reconnoitred from the cavern's mouth and window, and had reason to believe that the vessel which landed the smugglers must have put off to sea again, since the tide was low, and no craft was near the bay.

He had much difficulty in arousing Dangerfield, and making him prepare for his removal. He was compelled to help him to stand, and then to place him between two men for his support; for, what between his dread of death and his dogged obstinacy, he would not aid himself.

"The lieutenant has the patience of the police. I should knock him down and make him pick himself up again," said one

of the men, as Dangerfield rolled about, almost like a lay figure, while Firman went to the opening of the cave to watch what was going on without.

CHAPTER III.

DANGERFIELD'S NEXT MOVE.

"I HAVE told him that I cannot marry him; that I will never be a disgrace to him or his mother, who is hard—hard as stone," sobbed Jerusha.

"Perhaps you have been hasty, my lass; but God will order all things well if you trust in Him," returned the miller.

This was spoken a short time after Jerusha's interview with Firman. She had left him only to encounter her father, who was anxiously expecting her, and who forgot his own misery at sight of her tears. Seated

on the old place once more—alone once more—she sobbed out her grief with her arms round his neck, her head on his shoulder. But she soon recovered herself.

"What a simpleton I am!" she cried. "Father, tell me what you did at Sandport, and whom you saw."

"I paid Solomon Hasluck, whose love for thee, my lass, was not as great as his love of money. He took my cheque and had it cashed, and I hope he returned home content. I am thankful that my Rushy didn't care for him. Better die an old maid than marry such a miserly, narrow-minded chap."

"That is what I mean to do," said Jerusha, sighing, smiling, and brushing off a tear simultaneously. "What happened when Cousin Solomon left?"

"I went to the magistrates, and became

bail for Levi. He is to be released to-morrow. They said my word was enough. What will they say when all the truth gets abroad?"

"That you are a righteous man, father, and Captain Dangerfield a bad man."

"And Mark, my lass? What will they say of him?"

"That he is weak, and wild, and easily duped. I wish he had faced it all, and then Janey would not have been stricken down."

"My fault—all my fault. I ruined the lad, and it is but just I should stand or fall with him. But it goes hard with 'those poor sheep in the wilderness,' who have been led astray by him and Dangerfield. It is hard upon Levi and the rest of them."

"Shall I tell Tilly about Levi, father? She has been moping all day. Do you

think he cares for her? She is really very fond of him."

"Call her in, and let us give her a word of advice. She is not likely to break her heart."

When Tilly came in she had her apron to her eyes.

"Sit down, Tilly, there by the fire, and be comforted," said the miller, kindly, at which Tilly began to sob.

"Levi will be back here to-morrow, I hope."

"Lawk, measter! and what be that to I?" exclaimed Tilly, the apron falling, and revealing a face which was certainly neither the cleaner nor the handsomer for tears. "He da goo ater Miary more nor I. She med have un an' welcome."

"Then why have you been so unhappy?" asked Rushy.

"Twar luonsome by myzuf, Miss Rushy. Please, measter, don't you goo vor to tell un as I tuold upon un. He'd werrit the life out o' I."

"I'm afraid he'll 'werrit' it more if you marry him, Tilly," said the miller, the twinkle appearing for a moment in his eye. "You'd better think twice of it before you leave a good place for a worse."

"I've a-thought it auver scuores o' times, measter, and bean't no nearer than at vust," replied Tilly, despondingly. "But I duon't care for nothin' zo long as he bian't hanged vor a smuggler."

"They don't hang for it now-a-days, Tilly," said Mr. Gay, resuming the severe gravity of tone and manner he had shown of late. "Thank God, they only hang for murder now. I remember the time when men were hanged for stealing a sheep or

knocking down a hare, and a smuggler had a poor chance of life."

He shuddered, and covered his face with his hand.

Jerusha motioned Tilly to go, and Tilly, nothing loth, departed. No sooner was she in her own domain than she exclaimed—

"Measter da think I wants un for a swit-heart. Oonce 'e cooms back I'll zhow un what's what."

With which resolution Tilly poured boiling water into a tin dish, and forthwith began to wash her face in a lather potent enough to extract all traces of dirt and tears. Then she rubbed her cheeks with a coarse cloth till they became two peonies, put on a clean apron, smoothed her hair, and declared to herself that nobody should say she "muoped and fretted after a great gakey as hankered after that Miary."

Jerusha and her father continued long in earnest conversation. Mr. Gay said he thought it would be wise for Janey to remain with her aunt until the search had been made on which he had resolved, and bade Jerusha return to the villa and sleep with her, if necessary. He trusted to Firman's conviction as to the personal safety of his son, and before he and his child separated, they, like King Hezekiah, "spread their anxiety before the Lord," and asked for direction from Him both for themselves and Mark.

When Jerusha was gone to the villa, her father went to his bureau, and sat there a long time, examining and arranging bills and papers, and casting up accounts. He tried to think over what he was worth in landed and funded property, in case of having more to pay for Mark; and having

done this as nearly as he could, he came to the resolution that he would, if necessary, sacrifice all he had in the world if he could only rescue his son from Dangerfield, and restore him to respectability. His self-accusations were not, perhaps, altogether without foundation, for the father who indulges a child injudiciously, before the child can discriminate between good and evil, must bear his share of blame if bad results follow.

Before going to bed he walked over his premises, inspecting the mill, the pond, and finally The Bluffs. Another of his men slept in Levi's place, and he had stationed one in his son's house, either of whom was to call him if necessary—but everything was still. He then walked down to Beachton by the back way, to see if Job Tuck had returned. But Job was still absent,

and his wife expecting him. She believed that he had gone off to try to sell some nets that she and the children had made, and to pick up mundic; and she would have had no food for her children that day but for the meal given from the mill, and skim-milk and broth from the villa. The frost had made bad worse, and the fishermen's families were in much distress.

"What will become of them all if we are ruined?" thought the miller, as he returned homewards. "Reckless people don't consider the misery they bring on others. 'But God careth for the sparrows,' so why should the poor fear, since He cares for them also."

He did not sleep much that night, and was again early abroad. Jerusha was with him at eight o'clock, having slept with Janey.

He inquired anxiously for her, and was told that she was much the same, and wanted to return to the mill, but was restrained by Miss Martha's loud and resolute commands to stay where she was.

"Indeed she has a fire in her room, and every comfort," said Jerusha, "but she is not quite herself."

"And Madam Firman! What did she say to my Rushy? Will she be a mother to her?" asked the miller.

"Never, father; that must be over," said Jerusha, "she is as cold as the snow."

Pensioners not to be ignored surrounded the mill, and Rushy forgot her own troubles in theirs. Hungry birds were waiting for their breakfasts, and hungry children for promised food. Feeding them, she remembered the promise to those who "gave bread to the hungry, and clothed the naked

with a garment," and she returned to her father with smiles.

All that morning they were expecting Firman and his men, but they did not arrive. Mr. Gay was disappointed, because he was restless until he knew the worst; Jerusha, because, in spite of her better judgment, she was longing to see Firman again. Captain Bowles came instead, and did not receive the hearty welcome to which he was accustomed. But he was not conscious of it, he had so much to tell.

"Have you heard the news?" he began. "Lieutenant Firman has taken Cap'en Dangerfield prisoner. Found him and a lot of smugglers in some cave down about Seagull's Nest. That young fellow's fortune's made. I wish I knew who his mother is. I met 'em on their way to Sandport this morning. Firman and a strong force of the

coastguard escorting Dangerfield, with his arm in a sling, and looking like thunder, and a set of hang-dog smugglers."

"And Mark?" ejaculated Mr. Gay and Jerusha.

"Mark; what of him?" asked the Captain, who did not know of his flight with Dangerfield.

"They sailed together, you know," said Jerusha, fearing lest her father should betray their position, and knowing that Captain Bowles kept no secrets. "You are sure he was not with the others you mention?"

"Positive! I made a point of stopping young Firman, but I could get nothing out of him but a message for you. He asked me to tell you and your father that he was afraid he could not be at Beachton to-day. I think he has his eye on you, Rushy; don't

snub him, my dear. He'll soon be a captain. Pity he left the navy, he'd have been admiral in time. I wish you'd find out for me what he knows about some people of my name, or, at least, what his mother knows. The closest woman I ever saw in all my life, and closeness don't breed confidence."

Captain Bowles's news was confirmed almost as soon as communicated, by a couple of men from Seagull's Nest, who asked to see the miller. Chivers was one of them, who knew more about the state of affairs than he chose to acknowledge, and who was really anxious to do Mr. Gay a good turn. He told him all he knew, which was that he had been met, soon after he had risen that morning, by a Preventive man, who asked him to lend a hand in clearing away some brushwood from the cliff. Chivers and one

or two other men had taken their hatchets in trepidation, and, being led to the spot he knew well, were requested to lop off branches, and free the hidden path to the cave. There was a body of the coastguard stationed in the Cove, who promised them remuneration. When this work was done as well as the frost would permit, and the entrance to the cave laid bare, there came forth from it with comparative ease, as Chivers thought, coastguardsmen and smugglers alternately, the former armed, and watching the latter. Finally, Captain Dangerfield crept out, preceded and aided by Firman, and followed by two of his men. Escape would have been impossible, as would have been a struggle on the dangerous rocky path. Chivers said that he got a side view of the faces of all the prisoners, as they were marching up the ravine on their

way to the road to Sandport, but that Dangerfield was the only one he had ever seen before.

"And," he added, "he looked like a bear caught unawares. I wur mortal zorry for 'un, Measter Gay, bad as he may be."

"'He went for wool and came home sheared,' Chivers," replied the miller. "That's what all do at last who go against the laws. I hope you have clean hands. If you know anything for or against me or mine speak it out like a man, and ease your conscience."

But Chivers was too wary to compromise himself. So far he had escaped, but he knew that it was a bare escape. He had resolved to have no more to do with the smuggling trade, but he would still remain staunch to his mates, particularly to Mark. Events had passed so rapidly that he seemed

to be in a dream, and when he saw Mark's captain clambering down the very path he had helped to clear, he thought he must be walking in his sleep. But he little imagined, as he watched Dangerfield from a safe distance for fear of recognition, that the man who looked so fierce and scowled so ominously had barely revived from a dread of death so overpowering that he had passed the greater part of the night in sleepless agony of expectation of the sweep of that unsparing scythe which yet had not cut him down. Still Chivers had learnt a lesson from the fate of others, that was not lost upon him.

CHAPTER IV.

JANEY LOST.

WHEN Captain Bowles left the mill he carried his news straight to the villa. He found Miss Martha alone in her dining-room, and speedily communicated it. She had been much worried by the late events, and was sorry that she had ever lent herself to the purchase of smuggled goods, though she still persisted in saying there was no harm in it. But nothing aggravated her so much as Mrs. Firman's manner towards Jerusha. She was shrewd enough to perceive that the lieutenant admired her, though

not aware that the proposal had actually taken place, and she saw that this was disagreeable to the mother.

"Madam Firman will be more cock-a-hoop than ever now over 'my son Frank,'" exclaimed Miss Martha, when she had heard the Captain to the end of his tale. "If Rushy was dirt to her before she'll be ashes now. I wish her ladyship was gone."

"I thought you were in love with her, Miss Martha. They say that women do fall in love with women sometimes, though it seems uncommon unnatural," said the Captain. "I wish you'd fall in love with me."

"Bless us, what next? I never fell into such a muddle in my life with man nor woman, and never mean to. But no guest o' mine shall look down on our Rushy. As if she wasn't a deal too good for a lieutenant in the coastguard! Hang the coastguard, I

say; they've brought nothing but trouble to innocent folk, from the lieutenant downwards."

"Cap'en Dangerfield, for instance, who has led Mark into all this mess," remarked Captain Bowles, sarcastically. "He's uncommon innocent."

"There, that's enough. Let me finish my accounts, and you go in and gossip with *the ladies*, for of course Mrs. Firman, mother of a full-fledged lieutenant about to become a captain, must be a lady, and she says Janey is 'very ladylike.' She don't venture to remark upon Rushy to me, knowing my peculiarities."

"You're always for getting rid of me, Miss Martha," rejoined the Captain.

"I can get rid of everything that's troublesome, all but the birds; I encourage them, and I had a fine triumph last Autumn.

The gooseberries have failed of late years, and all the neighbours have been shooting down the small birds, saying they destroyed 'em. I sowed charlick round my bushes, on the contrary, to attract 'em. They came in flocks to peck the seed, and out o' gratitude pecked the blight off the gooseberries at the same time, and I had the best crop in the country. I'll be bound you shot your birds."

"Some of 'em; but I'll sow charlick this year on your account, Miss Martha," said the Captain, gallantly.

"Bless the man, what a chattermag he is!" retorted Miss Martha. "A fine contrast to my visitor in the parlour, anyhow."

"Now I say, Miss Martha," began the Captain, confidentially, "try to find out for me who your visitor was before she

married. I've my reasons for wanting to know."

"Mercy on us! you're not so modest but you can ask her yourself. If you want a wife, marry her—always provided she'll have you, for there's two to every sort of bargain."

"She don't take my fancy matrimonially, Miss Martha. But I'll take your advice and have another try at her."

"Do. You'll find her much as usual."

The Captain obeyed Miss Martha, and withdrew to the other parlour.

There he found Mrs. Firman and Janey. The latter was lying on the couch, the former at her usual work, and both were silent. He soon aroused them by his news —Mrs. Firman by what related to her son, Janey by the account of Dangerfield as being connected with Mark. But when

Janey found that her husband was not implicated in the late capture, she relapsed into a strange lethargic state, which she had been in all the day. Miss Martha was for letting her "sleep it out," and Mrs. Firman, who had taken a fancy to her, volunteered to remain with her, so Jerusha's presence had not been needed.

Captain Bowles renewed the game of fence with Mrs. Firman, according to Miss Martha's advice, and they had half an hour's practice in conversational thrusts and parries on account of the Bowles' families, English and American, but still without result. Mrs. Firman was reticent as ever. The Captain considered, however, that he had gained a point in the discovery of Mrs. Firman's maiden name through her son, though he did not think it politic to let his adversary know of this, and persisted in his covert attack.

He remained to tea, after which Miss Martha dispatched him to the mill with a message to the effect that Jerusha was not to sleep with Janey that night, as she was better; but "to bide at home and take care of her father, like a dutiful daughter as she was." This at the top of her voice, for Mrs. Firman's benefit.

As regarded Janey, it did not indeed seem to signify whether she slept alone or not, since she did little but sleep. The two ladies helped her to bed in a comfortable warm room, and left her door ajar, which was all that appeared to them necessary.

Still it was not all; for when Miss Martha went to her room the following morning, the white dove had flown; Janey was nowhere to be found. The villa was at once in a commotion, and even Mrs. Firman became animated through anxiety.

"She is sure to be at the mill. I will go there; but no, she is not dressed, all her clothes are here!" cried Miss Martha, alarmed for her niece for the first time, on perceiving that she must have left the room in her night-dress.

"She is not right in her head; send for my son Frank—he was to be in this neighbourhood," suggested Mrs. Firman.

And this was no bad suggestion; so everybody was sent hither and thither to look for him, while Miss Martha also hurried off in search. Every corner of the house, garden, and farm premises was examined, but there was no Janey.

"She must have destroyed herself—thrown herself into the sea—and all for that worthless Mark!" she shouted, as she wandered about bonnetless. "If only I had let Jerusha sleep with her! And I

should but for pride. What will her mother say? What will Martin Gay say? I wish we could find Lieutenant Firman—he is the only helpful man I ever saw in my life."

But neither Janey nor Firman could be found. The latter had been at Beachton that morning, but of the former no one knew anything. The general notion was that she had destroyed herself in a fit of temporary insanity, and Miss Martha's one idea was the sea, which was unsearchable. Had she been in her senses, she would not have gone out into the frost and cold unclad, and she certainly would not have ventured to the mill in such a state.

"The Bluffs! We must search The Bluffs first. Perhaps she went out there and threw herself from the cliffs," cried the ex-

cited aunt, after her vain wanderings in and out of the villa.

And she ran breathless to The Bluffs, but still there was no Janey.

CHAPTER V.

A SOMNAMBULIST.

WHILE the search was being made for poor Janey and Firman, the latter was parading the downs not far from the mill, The Bluffs, and Beachton.

Suspicion had now fallen on that hitherto unsuspected hamlet, and he had received orders from head-quarters to prosecute his work thereabouts, for Government was resolved to extirpate the smugglers from the southern coast of England.

So he had been standing on the cliffs, near Mushroom Bank, in the early dawn,

surveying the abode which contained one who was becoming every day more dear to him, and wondering how he could perform the duty imposed upon him, not only by the miller, but by his own private judgment, and dreading the effect on Jerusha if anything contraband were found at the mill.

He was striving to keep his spirits up by hoping that she was not serious in her rejection of him, while he strove to maintain his bodily warmth by pacing to and fro on the cliffs, when his attention was suddenly arrested by something white, which appeared to be coming towards him. It was barely daylight, and he was some little time before he assured himself that it was either a woman or a ghost.

His mind instantly turned to Jerusha, but she was too sensible to be on the cliffs in white at such an hour and time of year,

with the snow still on the ground, and the frost only just beginning to yield. He walked cautiously to meet the strange apparition, and saw that it was a woman, barefooted, and clad in a night-dress.

As he approached her, he recognised Janey, by the white face, and the fair hair escaped from a disordered cap. While he was hesitating a moment what to do or say, she passed him rapidly by, and he saw that her eyes were closed. He had never heard that in her childhood she had sometimes walked in her sleep, a practice supposed to have been abandoned with maturer years; but she was evidently a somnambulist, and he had heard that it was dangerous suddenly to arouse one.

She was walking almost on the edge of the cliffs, and any sudden call or slip of the delicate white feet might be her destruction.

He followed her rapidly and breathlessly, and soon gained upon her; but he did not dare to overtake her, lest he should awaken her, and so cause her to fall over the cliffs. His endeavour was to reach her and place himself on the cliff side of her; but this was impossible, because she kept so near the edge. She was apparently making for Seagull's Nest, and he at last determined to pass her by taking a small circuit on the downs. He accordingly hurried onward, and succeeded in getting before her with difficulty. In all his life he had never felt such an agony of suspense. He had no doubt that she was wandering in search of Mark, and had probably heard the previous day of the capture at the cave near that spot. He glanced back at her, and saw that one hand hung at her side, the other was laid on her breast. He had never seen

anything human so ethereal. It seemed as if the cold, raw morning must nip her, much more the perilous sleep-walk. He ran towards the fence and waited.

Facing her a moment, he saw that she staggered, and neared the cliffs. He hesitated no longer, but went cautiously towards her, and succeeded in taking hold of the arm laid on her breast, and drawing her from the edge of the precipice, over which she must have fallen in a few moments. He did not arouse her, but fancied he heard her breathe her husband's name as she strove to move forwards.

The sun had just risen above Golden Cap when they reached the fence, and by a slight *détour*, he succeeded in turning her steps towards the mill. She seemed uneasy at first, but finally yielded to the light touch of his hand on her arm, and allowed her-

self to be guided imperceptibly, he being nearest the cliffs. He had some difficulty in retaining his hold and maintaining his position with safety when they reached the second fence between Mushroom Bank and the downs, but she crossed it with apparent facility. Once on the familiar bank, now clad in its Winter winding-sheet, they proceeded with comparative ease, she hurrying onwards, and he keeping pace, still holding her arm.

Once she slipped and nearly fell, but he supported her, and when they came to the mill-pond she was for crossing the dam, but he so contrived to intercept her as to turn her steps towards the front door of the mill.

But by this time the frost had seized her, and she began to walk with difficulty. Still she turned the handle of the door, and

entered the passage of the house; then she staggered, and he was obliged to sustain her.

The sound of their footsteps brought Jerusha from the hall, where she and her father were at breakfast.

"Hush! She has been walking in her sleep," whispered Firman, pointing to his apparently insensible companion.

"Bring her upstairs," said terrified Jerusha, and he bore her to Jerusha's room.

Was she still asleep, or was she dead? Neither of them could tell. They laid her quietly down on the bed, and Jerusha covered her with warm blankets; but there was no evidence of life. The white eyelids lay like drooped lily-bells on the white cheeks, which were cold as the frost itself.

"Where did you find her? What was

she doing?" asked Rushy, bending over her and listening for her breathing.

Firman recounted the event briefly, adding,

"I was careful not to awaken her, and even now she must not be suddenly aroused."

"No—no, but I fear she will never—never awake again," said Jerusha, suppressing a cry.

Then both bent over the white face, and saw, at the same moment, the colourless lips move slightly as in pain.

"She is not dead—she breathes. Thank you. God bless you!" cried Jerusha, bursting into tears.

"And God bless you, my darling!" he rejoined, taking her in his arms for a moment, and kissing her. "I will go and prepare your father for this."

He left the room, and met the miller on the stairs, who had followed Jerusha, and seen Janey.

"What is to happen to us next?" said poor Mr. Gay. "Has the child sought to destroy herself?"

Almost before Firman could speak Miss Martha's voice was heard, even louder than usual, shouting through the house, "Have you seen Janey? We have lost her! We don't know what has become of her! She has left the house ever since daybreak."

No one who had seen Miss Martha at that moment would have believed that she was the strong-minded woman who had so often scolded Janey for her delicate, new-fangled ways. Her dress was disordered, her cheeks pale, her eyes brimful of tears.

"Tell me, for God's sake, if you know

anything about Janey!" she cried, as Mr. Gay and Firman joined her.

"She is safe! She is with Rushy," said Firman.

"He has just brought her in, God only knows from where—dead or alive—all in white," stammered the bewildered miller; "it is Mark's doing—no, mine—it is——"

"Never mind what it is if she hasn't destroyed herself," said Miss Martha. "She didn't — she didn't attempt suicide, did she?"

"No, she was asleep—is still asleep," replied Firman. "I met her on the cliffs and brought her here."

Miss Martha could say no more. She was quite overcome; but she took Firman's hand in hers, and held it long, in testimony of her gratitude.

"She must not leave Rushy any more.

She must be with us till Mark comes back," sobbed Mr. Gay, on whom the appearance of Firman carrying Janey had had a more distressing effect than all the rest. "She must never be left alone at night if she walks in her sleep. We will guard her as our one ewe lamb."

And the tender-hearted miller burst into tears, while Firman thought of Jerusha.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MILL SEARCHED.

WHEN Janey's excited friends grew a little calm, Miss Martha crept upstairs to listen at her door. Jerusha, hearing her footstep, partially unclosed it, and whispered that Janey was still sleeping, and must not be disturbed, but that she hoped and believed that all was well. No sooner did she return to Mr. Gay and Firman with this good news than the miller informed Firman of his intention to have his mill searched, as he understood smuggled goods had been, and probably still were, secreted in it.

"Do not be hasty, sir," remonstrated Firman. "There is no suspicion as yet—"

"We will have done with it at once, if you please," interrupted Mr. Gay. "When everything is above-board, I shall know where I stand. You are a straightforward young man, and should know that secresy is the father of lies."

"But 'discretion the better part of valour,'" returned Firman, much distressed at the work thus thrust upon him.

However, the miller was resolute in requesting that his mill should be turned out under order of the coastguard, since information had been brought him that unlawful goods were, or had been, concealed therein. Miss Martha listened aghast. She had scarcely recovered from her panic about Janey, and here was another. Janey was lying white, and cold, and still as a corpse

upstairs, just breathing, and that was all—and now that obstinate Martin Gay was about to add to the domestic confusion.

"The longer I live the gladder I am that I have neither husband nor children to worry and ruin me!" she said. "Marry, indeed! as well be hanged at once."

"Still I had a good wife, Cousin Martha. Rushy is the comfort of my old age, and, so far as I have seen, Lieutenant Firman is a dutiful son."

"Too dutiful by half. Better have no mother, for that much," rejoined Miss Martha, spitefully. "But look you here, Cousin Martin, if there should be a chance barrel of spirits found on your property, you'll have to pay for other people's misdemeanours, and, anyhow, that's not justice."

"Government shall not be a penny the

worse for me or mine, if I can help it," said the miller. "If the laws are not perfect, I can bide my time till they improve."

"Then you'll bide till the judgment, Cousin Gay."

Nevertheless Firman was compelled to fetch his men to the mill; and Miss Martha's interest and curiosity combined, induced her to remain there until she should learn the result of Mark's smuggling, his wife's sleep-walking, and their father's obstinacy.

Perhaps it was fortunate for Jerusha that she knew nothing of what was passing below stairs. Her great anxiety was to be near Janey when she awoke, in order to allay such fears as must arise on finding herself in a strange room. After Firman left her she stood a moment by Janey's side, her hands clasped, her head drooping, her cheeks once more rosy as the dawn. In spite of her

rejection he loved her still, and although she was sincere in her resolution not to mar his prospects or offend his mother by marrying him under present sad circumstances, she felt a marvellous joy and pride in his constancy. But she did not allow herself to grow sentimental over it, or to neglect poor Janey for longer than those few moments. She rang for Tilly to bring her a hot bottle for Janey's feet, and furze to kindle a fire rapidly—did all that occurred to her, in short, to restore circulation; and had, after some time, the happiness of knowing that the languid stream of obstructed life began to flow slowly again. When Miss Martha came to the door, she was therefore able to re-assure her, and to promise to call her when Janey awoke. Her mind was too busy and excited to receive impressions from without, and the

unusual stir about the mill-dam and the lofts was unheeded.

Nevertheless, a strange scene was enacting at the mill. Mr. Gay, and all his men except Levi, with Miss Martha and Tilly, stood in the yard to watch the Preventive men brought there by the lieutenant. Indeed, Mr. Gay might be said to superintend them, since Firman's resolution appeared to waver.

"I know every sack of corn and flour in that store," said Mr. Gay, as the coastguard overhauled the basement. "Lend a hand, Jack. Sim, you're as lusty as two of 'em; lend a hand, I say; don't you see the sacks are too heavy?"

"I bean't a-gwain vor to mwile myzuf wi' hefting vor thay, measter," replied the man, sulkily.

"Then I must," said the miller, putting

his shoulder to a sack of flour, and so making his servants obey him.

To the inexpressible relief of workers and watchers no contraband goods of any kind were found on the ground-floor of the mill.

"I was pretty sure of that," said Mr. Gay, quietly.

"Thay Preventers be hippity-hoppity chaps a'ter all," remarked Tilly, contemptuously, to one of her friends; "thay got no zhoulders to speak of."

It was harder work to turn over the goods in the lofts than below, but at the same time it was more probable that they should have been made the places of concealment.

The great mill-wheel looked silently on as Preventive and mill men ascended the steep ladders, and, at Mr. Gay's

commands, moved every sack the rooms contained.

"Thay be well vloured, Miss Martha," laughed Tilly, as a shower of white dust speckled the blue coats of the coastguard. "Thay won't vind nothen' but rottletraps up there."

"You know more about it than you choose to tell, Tilly," said Miss Martha; and Tilly winked.

"I bean't a-gwain to tell she," muttered Tilly, as Miss Martha moved nearer the approach to the lofts, and Tilly joined one of the men who was outside. "She be as uopen as a big tulip. I say, Jack, did 'ee do it? Did 'ee get rid o' it all?"

"Ees, Tilly, and measter 'ull have to thank you. They be a-playing at hidy-buck, and won't find nothen'."

"Haw! haw! haw!" laughed Tilly.

"'Twor well as Miss Rushy went vor to zleep at the villa, or she'd 'a vound it out. She's as zharp as a weasel. You hadn't nothen' to do with the smugglers now, Jack? Measter Mark and Levi is enough vor thay to goo vor to ruin."

"Noa, Tilly. Chivers an' Job Tuck, they helped us, while the Preventers wur down by Hollow Cove."

"Mum's the word," said Tilly, as a loud "hurrah!" sounded from the lofts.

Everything had been moved, "rottle-traps" and all, and nothing found that could criminate Mr. Gay. There were one or two empty kegs that Firman suspected to have contained smuggled spirits, and nothing more. The hurrah had been raised by the miller's men, and was liberally joined in by the coastguard, for Martin Gay had no enemy in the world but his only son.

Miss Martha took it up, and Jack and Tilly echoed it, so that the old mill rang with joy, while Mr. Gay and Firman mutely clasped hands.

But it was not all over yet, in spite of Tilly's shrewdness and devotion. The involuntary hurrah startled Jerusha, and was the unintentional means of arousing Janey.

"Is that you, Rushy dear? How kind! What noise is that? They are shouting for Mark," murmured Janey, looking about her with bewildered eyes. "Where am I? I thought I was at Aunt Martha's. Go and see what they are hurrahing for, dear Rushy. How strange it seems!"

Jerusha went to look out of her window, and saw only Tilly and Jack, as they stood near the mill-wheel in the distance.

"It is nothing, dear; only some of the men making a noise," said Rushy.

"It must be for Mark. Let me go and see," said Janey, making an effort to move, moaning as she did so, and falling back.

"I will go if you will promise to stay here," said Jerusha, alarmed lest Janey should rise from her bed.

But there was no fear of that. Poor Janey was chained by that tyrant that held the world enthralled of late, the frost. He had penetrated through every joint, and although he had not reached the fount of life, he had succeeded in paralysing the limbs with his icy fingers. Janey was in the first stage of rheumatic fever, and was not to walk again, either sleeping or waking, for many a day.

"I will not move. I don't think I can move," she said, meekly. "I feel pains all through me; but go, dear, and see, for they are shouting for Mark. Bring him here,

dear, though perhaps he will be angry."

The noise had ceased, but Jerusha was desirous to tell her father and Miss Martha that Janey was awake; so she ran downstairs, and, finding the house empty, went into the yard. She was greeted by Tilly with the words, "There wur nothen' smuggled nowheres;" after which she saw a crowd of people within the mill, Firman amongst them.

She guessed what had taken place; and feeling strangely shy since her last interview with Firman she hesitated to join them; but they came forth from the mill, and she was soon surrounded by her numerous friends.

"All is right," whispered Firman, but she could not give him even a thankful glance.

"How is Janey?" asked the miller. "Awake and better? Then the Lord be

praised for all His mercies. So far, my lass, I am no receiver of smuggled goods; the old mill is innocent. The pond has yet to be dragged, and the frost is giving. One more turn will, I hope, clear all, and then Mark can come back and begin a new life, God helping him."

Jerusha's dimples were in play once more, and the bright eyes glanced up from beneath the long black lashes. It was Firman who caught the transient smile. She was surrounded by him, her father, and Miss Martha, while Tilly and the men hovered near. Her unfed poultry were clucking about, and her hungry robins chirped in the frosted trees above.

"See if thee cannot find anything to give our friends to eat and drink, my lass," said her father. "Cousin Martha will see to pretty Janey for a bit."

But Rushy commissioned Miss Martha and Tilly to bring forth such good cheer as the house afforded, while she returned to Janey, whom she found watching the door with distended eyes. It was hard to tell her that Mark had not arrived, and to see the tears of disappointment roll slowly down her cheeks, and it was difficult, if not impossible, to account to her for her being at the mill. However, the more engrossing subject swallowed up the less, and Mark made her forget her change of abode.

Meanwhile, the miller feasted the men who, but for Tilly's penitent watchfulness, might have sent him to prison. For no sooner had Tilly heard that, owing to her confession, her master meant to have the mill searched, than she aroused Levi's accomplices, who, together with Chivers and Job Tuck, managed to carry off the

obnoxious goods which were concealed about the mill. Indeed, they were all beginning to feel that they had had enough of smuggling. This was effected during the night that Jerusha passed at the villa, and while her father was asleep. Tilly, who knew and heard everything that concerned the mill, had also overheard what her master said concerning the pond, and had made up her mind that "thay Preventers" should find nothing but fish therein if she could help it.

Levi returned that afternoon, more stolid, silent, and obtuse than ever. But he had not been taken prisoner in vain. Although he made no demonstration either of joy or anger when Tilly welcomed him back with her characteristic speech of "Lawk, Levi, I be glad you be coom whome. I wish every jack-rag o' thay Preventers wur burnt," he,

nevertheless, made up his mind to be content with cider for the future. He had given his little lift to the drunkenness that was to overwhelm England in some thirty years' time, but he did not calculate that at the end of that period enough pernicious liquor would be consumed in one year to give bread to every family in Great Britain for six months at least; or that in five or six years the national debt might have been paid off by the national drink. Levi was scarcely scholar enough for that; still he was wise enough to stop short of ruin both of body and soul. He soon learnt also what he had helped to bring upon his master, and what was yet to come.

Tilly gave him this information cautiously and without implicating herself, while he was indulging in a hot supper which she had cooked for his special delectation, and which

was highly flavoured with onions. But he ate and was silent, ruminating like a dull-eyed ox, but resolving at the same time.

After family prayers that night, Mr. Gay made a little extempore discourse, which touched Levi almost more than his imprisonment. A prayer had first been offered for the absent prodigal son, and the discourse ran upon the clause in our Lord's prayer, "Lead us not into temptation."

"We ask our Father to keep us out of temptation," he said, "but we don't stop to think how often we lead one another into temptation—thus doing to others what we pray against for ourselves. That is contrary to the commandment. We should 'do unto others as we would they should do unto us.'"

CHAPTER VII.

DANGERFIELD IN PRISON.

WHILE these events were passing, Captain Dangerfield was lodged in the county gaol until the Quarter Sessions. Bail was declined for him, even if he could have procured it. Not that he wanted money. The smugglers had generally a fund from which to draw in time of need, and he was so far supplied as to be able to obtain certain privileges until his trial came off. He had a small dark room to himself, where he had plenty of leisure for meditation, and as he had not yet lost that dread of death

which had haunted him in the cave, he passed through many phases of thought. His wound was slow to heal, and the prison doctor hinted at possible mortification and consequent amputation, when he grew restive and unmanageable. His nature and temper were morose and violent, but the terror which was upon him somewhat softened and calmed them. He was not so much distressed by the prospect of the penalty he might have to pay as captain of a band of smugglers as by the thought of his wound and the pain it caused him. He was reckless as to respectability, but not as to eternity.

He was seated at a table, making efforts to write with his left hand, and exclaiming irritably from time to time at his failures, when a gaoler came to tell him that Mr. Gay of Beachton Mill asked to be allowed to see him. He hesitated before admitting

him, for he believed that he had come to reproach him, and even the most hardened dislike reproaches.

"What can he want with me?" he muttered. "Another of the canters of the Firman sort, anxious to convert me, I suppose. Let him come if he will."

And Mr. Gay was introduced into the prison-room.

He advanced towards Dangerfield, who remained seated near his table, with his back to the grated window. His arm was still in a sling, and when his visitor held out his hand with a friendly "How d'ye do, Captain Dangerfield?—I'm sorry to hear you've been ill," he said, moodily, "Can't shake hands, Mr. Gay, thanks to your friends of the coastguard. Sit down, if you can find a seat. These hospitable walls were not built for bodily ease."

Mr. Gay seated himself on the side of the bed, near which the prisoner's chair chanced to be placed.

"I am not come to disturb you, sir, or to intrude on your privacy," said Mr. Gay, as courteously and respectfully as if he had been addressing a prince in his palace. "I came to make two inquiries—one as to your health, the other as to my son."

"If my body were as sound and safe as Mark's, I should soon snap my fingers at those old women the magistrates," returned Dangerfield. "But I hear that you and the coastguard are hand in glove, and that you have obligingly opened your doors as well as your daughter's heart to your son's enemies; so it is scarcely safe to speak of your son, lest he should share the fate of your sacks."

"I do not yet know how far Mark is in-

volved," said the miller, as quietly as he could; "but he is my only son, and we have not seen him since the night on which he left his house in your company. We are assured he is safe, but on no certain authority. Ever since he left his home his wife, our pretty Janey,"—here the steady voice faltered—"has been beside herself with grief, and my Rushy and I have been very unhappy. But our sorrow seems swallowed up in Janey's greater sorrow. The poor young wife's heart will break if we cannot tell her for certain that her husband is alive. She is now laid down in rheumatic fever, caught by wandering about in the frost and snow in search of him. But her bodily state, dangerous as it is, counts for nothing when compared with her mind. We are afraid she may lose her wits altogether, and 'twere far better to follow her to her grave than to

watch her mind give way. You remember how weak and delicate she has been from a child. You knew her father before her, and, if I mistake not, played with him when you were both boys, and his mind was not strong."

Mr. Gay paused, but received no answer. The Captain's dark face continued set, but he moved uneasily, and when he met the speaker's eyes, he suddenly covered his with his hands, and leaned his elbow on the table, at which he had been trying to write. Mr. Gay continued,

"I think a few words from you, Captain Dangerfield, as to what has really become of Mark, may comfort us all, and especially Janey. She little thought she should see her husband no more after that day when she helped him to hide you from your enemies, and which was a sore day for her."

"I believe he is safe," said Dangerfield, hoarsely.

"That is some comfort. But where? And why doesn't he write us a line? I could then tell him that I have paid Solomon Hasluck, and that nothing has transpired against him."

"Paid Solomon Hasluck! Then you are a trump!" cried Dangerfield, suddenly starting up, but recoiling with a groan and curse, for the movement had given a painful shock to the wounded arm.

"Yes, I have settled with him," continued Mr. Gay. "I would willingly give all I possess to enable Mark to begin life anew. If I knew where he was, I would write and tell him so. He is young, and perhaps repentance is easier in youth than in age. Not that God looks to our years, but to our hearts; only the world, perhaps, is kinder

to the young than to the old. I should be glad to help you, also, to start afresh, if you would let me; or to do what I could for you under any circumstances."

"Thank you, Mr. Gay," ejaculated Dangerfield. "You are the first honest man who has volunteered to do me a good turn for many a long day. And perhaps you are returning good for evil."

"I have no intention of hinting at that," replied the miller. "We are all sinful creatures, liable to be led astray. If I had been stricter with Mark, maybe he would have been steadier; and if your parents had brought you up more piously, perhaps you would have stopped at home. Who knows? But our sins lie at our doors, yours at yours, now that you are arrived at years when you know right from wrong. The past is past. To-day only is ours, to-morrow we may be

stricken down like the grass. That is why—"

"Do they tell you my wound is dangerous?" interrupted the Captain. "Do they say it will be my death?"

"I have not heard so, I spoke generally. I was thinking more of Mark and Janey than of you, both of whom, I fear, are more for this world than the next. But it might ease your mind as well as theirs to tell me all you know of my boy; and ease of mind promotes ease of body. I would thankfully help you both, if you would help us."

"I believe you would," groaned Dangerfield, on whom the last hint had not been without effect. "Mark is now where I meant to have been, but for that accursed cave; on his way to America."

"America!" ejaculated the miller. "Then what will become of Janey?"

His resolution forsook him for a moment, but he feared to lose the chance of knowing all, so he recovered himself, and said, quietly, looking at Dangerfield,

"How did it all come about? I shall never betray your confidence, and shall know better how to act, if you will tell me everything, both for his sake and yours."

Dangerfield hesitated; but glancing at Mr. Gay's honest face he resolved to make a clean breast of it.

"When Mark and I left The Bluffs," he said, hastily, "we went down to Beachton, where a boat was to have been ready to row us off. There we saw those fiends of coastguards. We cut across to Seagull's Nest, in order to avoid them, and reach the cave—confound the cave!—by land instead of water. We reached it safely. We

found friends there, and waited for the tide. Mark is too brave a fellow to desert a man in distress, so he helped to launch a boat, and we rowed to a vessel that was waiting for us. Here we heard that the shore was alive with the coastguard, and that it was not safe for the boat to land, as Mark was already suspected. I persuaded him to remain with me on board until we got further particulars. The cave in Hollow Cove was still supposed to be undiscovered, and I was mad enough to risk another attempt to save the cargo of goods in hiding there. But I would not let Mark risk it also; indeed, your daughter's last words to me held me back. So he stopped on board while another craft put off for the Cove. You know the rest. No doubt our vessel, apprised by signals of our capture, set sail for America, whither she was bound,

with Mark on board. I dare not tell her name or captain, for she is as much of a smuggler as my *Sea Serpent*, though unsuspected. Now you know all I know, and I trust to your honour to say nothing about it. Mark could scarcely have written had he dared, and probably had no chance of returning home, for our signals on land would soon have informed the captain of our capture, and he must have weighed anchor at once. Of course our little craft, which we left below the cave anchored and unmanned, has become, like ourselves, Government property. I wish the land-sharks joy of us. I shouldn't care a fig for them but for my disabled arm and endangered life."

After this relation Mr. Gay remained some time silent. He was satisfied of his son's safety, but not of his freedom from a

possible fate such as Dangerfield's, should the vessel he was in be taken. Still, if she were unsuspected, he might leave her on his arrival in America. But he had no money —no friends. What would become of him? He communicated his fears to his companion, who said that as Mark was a good sailor he could work his way home.

"He told me," said Dangerfield, "that once he could see me safe he would wash his hands of smuggling for the future, and never again leave home."

"He said that! Then God be praised!" ejaculated Mr. Gay. "Now, what we have to do is to comfort Janey, and make his road clear to an honest livelihood. If only it please God to save our pretty Janey, and bring him back to her!"

"And what of Jerusha, who is worth all the Janeys between this and—and Mark?"

asked Dangerfield. "You will not let her marry our common enemy, that canting Firman?"

"She has refused to marry him," said Mr. Gay.

"Then, by ——, I will get well, sell the Grange to pay my lawyers, and turn over a new leaf, and marry her myself!" cried Dangerfield, once more causing agony to his arm by a sudden movement.

"You!" cried the miller.

"Yes, why not? I am no worse than other men, only I have done by sea what they do by land. Everybody shirks the taxes, and I shirk the excise dues. What's the difference? Perhaps, when I get Jerusha, I shall send 'conscience money' to the Board of Trade, as people do to the Exchequer. Ha, ha! that's the sort of thing you would be after, Mr. Gay."

"I hope I should, if I had failed to pay my portion for supporting a Government which maintains the integrity of my earnings, and strives to keep those in peace who choose to live in peace. If you will give me a clear statement of your present position and liabilities, I will see what honest dealing can do for you, provided you promise to pray to God to help you to give up your late courses, and lead a new life when you are free."

"I am more likely to die than live," said Dangerfield, gloomily.

"Then the greater reason for prayer, sir. I have taken the liberty to bring you a book which, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, will lead you from death unto life. I have prayed for you together with my own boy. I will continue to pray for you. Prayer is the key to the gates of Heaven."

"And what is the key to the gates of hell?" asked Dangerfield, scoffingly.

"Impenitence and unbelief," replied the miller, gravely and severely. "But having the keys in your own hands you can open either, and enter whichsoever kingdom you please. The Saviour in one, Satan in the other, sits on his throne ready to receive you. Decide this day which you will choose."

Mr. Gay laid a Bible on the table, and rose to go. Dangerfield begged him to stay. He was awed and touched by his manner and Christian kindness.

He sat down again, and once more strove to impress Dangerfield with his own strong religious convictions, but he could not tell whether his words took effect or not. He was, however, invited to come again, and even thanked for his visit. The Captain,

who was suspicious of most men, yet felt that there was generosity in one who could so far forget personal injury as to propose to aid and benefit the injurer.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNEXPECTED AID.

"THINK only that he is certainly alive, dear Janey, and will probably return in a few weeks, or months at the farthest," said Jerusha, when she had communicated the news brought by her father concerning Mark's escape to the invalid.

"Months are so long, and he does not write. We are not quite sure that he will ever come back. And America is so far! so far!" sobbed Janey, to whom distance meant death.

"Weeks pass so rapidly—or used to

pass rapidly," argued, and corrected herself, Jerusha; for hers had once sped by like railway trains, and now dragged like mourning coaches.

"They are long—and dull—and weary—when one cannot move," sighed Janey, who lay in Rushy's bed, unable to stir hand or foot, from severe rheumatic fever.

"They are, darling; they must be," replied Jerusha. "Let me read to you. Mrs. Firman has sent you a new book. It looks so interesting."

"Reading hurts my head. It is full of queer noises—bells, and those whirligigs we used to buy at the feast when I was quite a little girl. Sometimes the bells chime, and sometimes the whirligigs run round, and round, and round, as if my head were spinning. What can it be, dear Rushy?"

"Only the effects of a cold. Cousin Martha says the pier was enough to have blown her away, and frozen up all her blood, much more you who are so fragile. They should not have let you go on the pier."

"Aunt took me back to the villa when we left the pier. Why am I in your bed, Rushy? And may I not go back to the best bedroom? Mark will think me a coward if I am not there. He will be angry, Rushy. Does the white owl hoot now? Hark! it has got into my head, where the whirligig was. Now they are both whirring and hooting together! Take them out, Rushy; take them out!"

Jerusha rose, and made believe to do something to Janey's head which should extract the sources of her trouble, and she forgot them for a moment.

She was in a critical state, both of body and mind; sometimes being better and sane; at others in terrible pain and wandering. Jerusha humoured her in all things, knowing how frail were the fibres both of her mental and physical life. She scarcely left her night or day, for there was no one to take her place.

She had written to Mrs. Hasluck, and was almost glad to hear in reply that she knew not how to come, the children being laid up in influenza. Miss Martha volunteered, but she, although very kind, was noisy, in spite of her best efforts at quietude; and the doctor ordered perfect rest. Mr. Gay was as tender a nurse as his daughter, but he had much to occupy him, and Jerusha rarely left him alone with Janey, because her wanderings troubled him.

Aid came to her when and whence she

least expected it, which is sometimes the case with us all.

"What book did Mrs. Firman send, Rushy?" asked Janey, when she fancied the noises had ceased. "It was kind of her to think of me; she was very good to me when I was ill at Aunt Martha's. She was like you, quiet, and only did what I asked; she is a nice lady. I wonder if Mark would like her. When do you think he will come back?"

"Soon, dear, I hope. What did Mrs. Firman say to you when you were alone together?"

"Nothing; I don't think she spoke. Give my love to her, Rushy. I wonder how I was taken from the villa that night, and brought here after she and aunt came to look at me in my bedroom. I am very glad to be here, dear, but I cannot remember at

all. There is that owl again! If Mark were here he would catch it. He said he would shoot it, but I asked him not, for the white owl means no harm; at least, you said so, Rushy."

"God has made him a night bird, like the nightingale, that is all," said Jerusha, standing over Janey and smoothing her fair hair, as if to exorcise the owl.

It would be impossible to say how often Jerusha's resolutions to restrain her hasty temper were put to the test, and her clear, rapid judgment arrested, by poor Janey's wailings concerning Mark, and her unstable mind on all other points. But she asked earnestly for guidance and aid, and she had them.

All her personal comfort and happiness were overthrown, and she was tried in every stronghold in which she had hitherto

trusted. Her orderly house was in confusion, her kinsfolk were under suspicion, her dependents false, her pensioners neglected, the privacy of her chamber invaded, her books unopened, and her love imprudent. But she had still her father, who, she believed, was strong in a righteousness not his own; and she prayed that she also might be clothed in the garment that wrapped him closely round. If her roses paled, and her smiles withdrew, under the heavy hand of sorrow, the lights and reflections of her soul grew insensibly more transparent.

We have said that help came where she least expected it.

At Miss Martha's next visit she gave her Janey's message to Mrs. Firman, saying, at the same time, with a touch of humour,

"Silence is, after all, superior to sense, and most useful in the long run. Janey

likes Mrs. Firman because she never heard her speak, I dislike her for the same reason. One of her looks was enough for me. I would rather people spoke out."

"So would I, Rushy. I've changed my mind about her," said Miss Martha, who always spoke out. "As well be born deaf and dumb. She's always on the watch, like a fox. I can't think how she managed to have such a straightfor'ard son as her Frank. But his being in love with you don't agree with her delicate digestion. She can't swallow that pill a bit better than my boy Sam could swallow his. I was obliged to cut his up in bits, and put 'em in treacle, and even then he said, 'Lor, missus, it be neasty;' but he got it down. And that's how madam will be obliged to swallow hers—eh, Rushy?"

"She will not swallow that pill at all,

Cousin Martha," said Rushy; "I will not be forced down anyone's throat."

"Right, my lass! Better be as you are. But I'll give her ladyship Janey's love all the same."

"Janey's love" brought Mrs. Firman to the mill, where she had never been before. Fortunately Janey was asleep when Jerusha was told of the unexpected honour, and she was able to leave her for a short space. It was with a proud mien, but quickly-beating heart, that she met Mrs. Firman, whom she found in the parlour, quietly examining her "valuables." Their greeting was coldly polite, Jerusha forgetting, for the moment, her determination to keep down her pride, and Mrs. Firman resolved to maintain hers.

"Will you come into another room, Mrs. Firman? We have not always a fire in this," said Rushy, and the widow followed

her to the hall, where a cheerful fire was burning, and all looked bright.

"Miss Hasluck brought me your sister-in-law's message, Miss Gay," began Mrs. Firman, composedly. "I thought she might like to see me, so I took the liberty of calling."

Jerusha, shrewd as she was, could not discover whether interest in Janey, curiosity, or a desire to return Miss Martha's kindness, had caused this visit; but of one thing she was certain—that it was not intended for her.

"I left Janey asleep. She is very ill, but I will tell her of your kind intentions," she replied.

"I will wait until she awakes, if you will allow me," rejoined Mrs. Firman. "I have not ventured out before, since my illness, and may not again."

"Oh, certainly. I will see if she is

awake now. Perhaps you will excuse me, as I seldom leave her."

Mrs. Firman bowed a condescending assent, and Jerusha returned to Janey, in, it must be owned, even a less amiable frame of mind than when she left her. Janey's eyes unclosed just as Rushy crept up to her, and glanced at her with the vague look of bewildered inquiry that they always had when she awoke from sleep. They were almost the only members of her frost-stricken frame that were capable of moving at all; for even speech was, at times, difficult.

"Has he come home, dear?" were her first words, as they always were after any interval.

"Mrs. Firman has come to inquire for you," rejoined Jerusha, evading her question. "You remember that you sent her

your love, and she seems to return it quickly, for she brings it herself."

"How kind! She is a nice lady; I wish I might see her," murmured Janey, her voice being ever lowest after sleep.

"I will bring her up, for there is no danger of her talking too much, or annoying you by movement."

"Oh, no, she is so quiet, so quiet. A kind, nice lady."

Jerusha gave her patient a dose of medicine, followed by some jelly, smoothed her bed, gently stirred the fire, arranged the pretty room, and returned to Mrs. Firman.

"Janey would like to see you," she said, and that lady followed her upstairs. "You will not allude to her having walked in her sleep," she added, on the way. "We try to avoid that subject."

When she noticed how softly Mrs. Fir-

man spoke, and how gently she moved in the sick-room, she was almost inclined to forgive and forget her own grievance. Half a dozen words sufficed to make her at home, and when she took the chair Jerusha offered, and seated herself by Janey, a sort of calm stole over the troubled pale face of the invalid, and she even smiled as she said,

"Thank you for coming to see me. It is very, very kind."

"I hope I am not jealous, after all," thought Jerusha, as she felt herself again in some sort superseded. "I know I do love dearly to be first in my friends' hearts."

"Would you like me to remain?" asked Mrs. Firman, in a whisper, of Janey.

"Yes, if Rushy likes," replied Janey.

"Then I can relieve you, Miss Gay," said Mrs. Firman, taking off her bonnet, and drawing forth the inevitable baby's sock

from her pocket. "You had better lie down, while I remain here."

Jerusha knew that she ought to be thankful for this help, yet she was not. She could not bear that Frank Firman's mother should dislike her, yet attach herself to another, who would not, she was sure, have made him so good a wife as she should. However, she kissed Janey, and left them together, begging Mrs. Firman to ring if she wanted anything before she came back.

"You had better not come back till I ring," said Mrs. Firman, in a whisper. "She must not be excited, I see, and I am used to sickness."

"We are careful never to excite her," returned Jerusha, who did not quite like her province to be thus usurped.

Nevertheless, as she had not slept for

several nights, she obeyed Mrs. Firman's orders, and went to lie down, while that lady remained silent and patient by Janey's bedside.

CHAPTER IX.

A NOVEL SMUGGLER.

THE frost yielded at last, and there was a general thaw, which delighted equally the labouring man and the birds. Mr. Gay took advantage of it to have his pond dragged in the presence of Lieutenant Firman. It is almost useless to say that he had been anticipated the very night before. Levi and his colleagues, acting on Tilly's information, had abstracted such unlawful wares as had been cast into the innocent pond before the frost, and which were found strung upon a cable at its bottom. They

had all made a solemn protest that this was the last smuggling transaction they would engage in. But they had still further lessons to learn before they could comfortably return to their lawful occupations.

Firman shrewdly suspected that the fish would have the pond to themselves, knowing, as he did, the tricks of the smuggling trade. He therefore came to the mill to watch, with Mr. Gay, the water let out of the pond by his men. He was almost as thankful as the miller to find that the kegs of spirits which Tilly had hinted at were not there; and the pond was allowed to re-fill at its leisure, and much to the satisfaction of the various fish and water-fowls that frequented it.

"I am glad they have not mixed spirits with thy water, my old friend," said the

miller, apostrophising his pond. "Levi, you must know all about these matters, and it is your duty to tell me what you know."

"Dunno' nothin' 'scept what Measter Mark knowed," said stolid Levi. "Tisn't my business."

"You had better ask no questions, Mr. Gay. The less you know the better," remarked Firman. "You may be called as a witness, and you would certainly speak the truth, even if not questioned."

"I hope so," replied the miller. "Have you seen my Rushy? She is always with our pretty Janey."

"No. She avoids me; she little knows my nature, or she would understand how useless that is," replied Firman.

As the frost-chains melted, so the streams flowed again rapidly from the hills, swollen by

the snows. The pond was soon full, and the waterfall burst forth over the mill-wheel. The voices of the Spring, the songs of birds, the low of long-imprisoned cattle, accompanied the music of the cataract. But the wheel refused to turn. There was some obstruction, and the miller and his men sought for it in vain.

"Everything goes wrong, even to the busy wheel," thought Mr. Gay, as they were examining it. "Thomas Fudgit stopped yesterday. Pretty Janey's life-pulse scarcely throbs, and Mark is—God only knows where. But He does know, He knows even what ails the wheel, without which the staff of life would fail us. 'Wheel within wheel,' sure enough. The obstacle lies far below," he said to his men. "We must get rid of it somehow, and you must clamber down and look for it."

They descended with difficulty into the cavity on one side of the wheel, and found that it was half filled with small barrels, some of which had got so jammed between the wheel and the projecting stone-work, as to hinder its course. Here was the solution of more mysteries than one.

As Mr. Gay was standing by when this discovery was made, concealment was impossible.

"They be kags, not cogs," cried one of the men from the interior of the wheel, with a grim attempt at a joke.

"What do you mean, Sim?" asked the miller from above, looking down into the depths that contained the wheel.

"There be oone," was the reply, and a barrel was thrown up, and rolled at his feet.

Others succeeded, and in a few minutes

the disencumbered wheel turned as merrily as ever.

Mr. Gay looked from one man to another, gazing longest and sternest on Levi, but their faces expressed nothing but amazement. They were as much perplexed as he, as keg after keg rolled along the yard.

"I never drowed nothen' into she," said Levi, and so said all the rest, and maintained it.

"You have encouraged those who did. No wonder the wheel protested against you all, and was silent for shame," cried their excited master. "Levi, fetch the coast-guard; there are some at Beachton."

"'Twill tell agen Measter Mark, and mebbee you too, measter," responded the men. "No call vor to do that. Let's drow the kags into the zea an' a done wi' 'em.

The zea 'ull zwallow kags an' spirits, and not get drunk."

"Do as I order. Fetch the coastguard!" thundered the miller, whose temper was giving way, while his heart felt almost breaking. "Do you think I would screen Mark or myself more than one of you?"

"We hadn't nothen' to do wi' thay kags," protested all the men. "We be as innocent as the onborn biabe."

Mr. Gay believed them, for he knew their countenances, and how they looked when stolid from obstinacy, or astonished by sudden surprise.

He stood immovable, surrounded by the barrels. They seemed to dance and multiply before his eyes, the dozen becoming scores. He could not understand how they got into his beloved wheel, but he felt that without Mark's connivance they would not

have been there at all. His son had, after all, been guilty of breaking the laws, and of hiding the proofs of his guilt in the very wheel to which they all owed their livelihood. This seemed to the honest miller "the cruellest cut of all."

"Must I go myself to fetch the Queen's officers?" he exclaimed again, and Levi slunk away.

When the rest of the men also began to move stealthily off, he ordered them to remain where they were. There were several people about, waiting in the hope of having their wheat ground, and horses, asses, dogs, and poultry helped to make up a curious picture. There was Mark's untenanted house, the mill-pond with Jerusha's swans, ducks, and geese, the elms with their families of observant rooks, cawing their protests against all disturbing elements, the jubilant

waterfall and industrious wheel, the mill, and the back of the dwelling-house, from the door of which Tilly was peeping. All movement without, all repose within.

The repose, at least of the body, for Jerusha was seated by Janey, who was still bound by fetters stronger than those of the frost. But there was no rest for the mind or brain. No sooner did the wheel begin to work than the whirligigs returned, and Jerusha soon found that either the wheel must be made to cease, or delirium would ensue.

Levi returned, accompanied by Firman, who had just arrived at Beachton with plans for the new coastguard station. He was distressed by what he saw, but Mr. Gay advanced to meet him, and pointed to the scattered barrels.

"The mill is a smuggler after all, if I am not," he said sternly. "Those belong to you and your men; I and mine must answer for them. Make a note of them, and come with me to the rectory. Mr. Worthington will let me take out my own summons, or, maybe, take my word for bail. I have been trying to help Dangerfield; I must now appear at Quarter Sessions on my own account, as well as his and Mark's. They had nothing to do with this, for the mill was at work the day they went off. I and my wheel must answer for it."

"But, Mr. Gay, there is no such hurry," said Firman. "Let me inquire into this. Your men can probably, if they will, exculpate you. I am sure," he added, addressing the men, "that you will not let so good a master suffer for your faults."

"Noa, we wouldn't harm a hair o' his

head, but we knaws nothen' about thay kags," was the reply.

Firman had no resource but to take possession of them in the Queen's name. While he was counting them, Jerusha appeared in the yard. She ran up to her father, exclaiming,

"The mill-wheel must be stopped, or Janey will go mad! I cannot quiet her; it is dreadful!"

"Isn't the nurse come?" asked Mr. Gay. "She promised me faithfully to be here this morning. Stop up the water and the wheel," he shouted to his men. "Give the people flour instead of their wheat. We've plenty of grist as yet, thank God. Stop the mill, I say."

"Her be like a woman's tongue; her doan't want to stop when her's oonce set a-gwain," said one of the men, which caused a laugh.

Jerusha hurried across the yard to the groups of people who were waiting, and explained to them that her sister-in-law was dangerously ill, and could not bear the noise of the wheel. She hoped they would kindly take as much flour as was fair in exchange for their corn, and that she was sure her father would make it up to them when she was better.

"Dear heart, yes. I be zorry enough for all your trouble, Miss Rushy," was the reply.

Hastening back to the house, she encountered Firman, and saw the barrels. She held out her hand, and asked what they meant.

"That is more than I can say, dear Rushy. When the seas and the ponds fail them, the smugglers have recourse to the mill-stream, and when that fails they try the wheel.

Can you not stay one minute? I must speak to you, and combat your unnatural resolution."

"It would be useless," returned Jerusha, hastily. "I will neither ruin your prospects, offend your mother's pride, nor listen to one who is set as a watch over my father."

She pointed to the offending barrels, and left him.

She knew that she was unreasonable, still she began to look on him as a kind of spy, who, willingly or unwillingly, seemed to dog the steps of those she loved best. Nevertheless, she dashed off many bitter tears as she hastened back to Janey. She stayed them, however, as she passed her father.

"Where did they come from, dear?" she asked.

"Even the old wheel has turned against

me," he replied. "But she was honest, and refused to work while that mischievous liquor was alongside of her. She's no drunken sot; no dishonest trader. But I'll have it all out, Rushy. God bless thee, my lass! I'll have all fair and honest."

She saw that he was much excited, and would fain have stayed by him, but she dared not leave Janey; yet, she thought, he was her first duty. What could she do between them?

This question was answered for her. Some time after she had rejoined Janey, and while she was yet meditating how she could best do her duty by both, there was a gentle knock at her room door. She opened it, and saw Mrs. Firman.

"Miss Hasluck has asked me to come and sit with your sister-in-law," the lady said. "She has just gone to Woolleysheep-

fold with your father and my son, and thinks you would like to follow them."

This was Mrs. Firman's third visit, and Jerusha knew that it would be welcome to Janey. But what she meant as regarded Miss Martha she could not imagine. She did not stay to inquire, however, but having asked Janey if she would like to see Mrs. Firman, and received a pleased affirmative, she left them together, and ran downstairs.

The basement was empty, so she went into the yard, and saw Tilly standing near the mill with a knot of men. She joined them, a reproof on her lips for Tilly's love of gossip—the cause evidently of Mrs. Firman's appearance unannounced. But reproof was stayed on her lips by Tilly's words—

"Thick Preventer have carried off measter to Parson Worthington, because o' thay kags."

"Noa, Tilly. Measter carried off the Preventer—I heard un," argued Levi. "Measter Firman didn't want vor to goo."

Jerusha understood at once.

She went back to the house; put on her bonnet and cloak; called Mrs. Firman, somewhat imperiously, from Janey's side to the passage; asked her if she would kindly remain while she went out, forgetting, in her anxiety, that she was asking a favour of one who disliked her; and then returned to Tilly, ordered her to keep indoors, and to receive the nurse if she should arrive during her absence, as well as to attend upon Mrs. Firman; and finally started for Woolleysheepfold.

She had no time for reflection or observation. She did not even see the first golden celandine peeping from the hedgerow, or the lamb's-tails, as she was wont to call the

catkins, on the hazel-bushes. She did not even pause to look at Miss Martha's early lambkins, and she had seen none, as yet, that Spring. She walked and ran, in breathless haste, until she reached the Rectory gates. Here she met Mrs. Worthington, who at once asked for Janey, and who, as well as her husband, had been constant in their visits to the mill, but they had not seen Janey as yet.

"She is very, very ill," replied Jerusha, in answer to her inquiries. "Mrs. Firman is sitting with her while I have come in search of father and Cousin Martha, who have come to the Rectory. Have you seen them?"

"I believe they are at present with Mr. Worthington, my dear," replied the rector's wife. "But what makes you so hurried and anxious? Is anything amiss?"

"Everything is going wrong, I fear. Will you take me to them?"

Mrs. Worthington saw that something was amiss, and complied.

Jerusha found her friends and the rector seated round the table in the library, and heard Miss Martha in loud remonstrance.

Mr. Worthington shook hands with her kindly, and Firman vacated his seat by her father, and took his stand at the back of her chair.

"Why hast thou left Janey?" asked Mr. Gay, reproachfully.

"Mrs. Firman is with her, and I must stand by you, father," was the unhesitating reply.

"He is a greater fool than I thought him," cried Miss Martha.

"He has certainly put us all in an awk-

ward position," said the rector. "Why, Gay, nobody would believe you a smuggler if you were to swear to it yourself, yet I am compelled to take your depositions, and Mr. Firman's, and——"

"My bail!" shouted Miss Martha. "He wasn't content to make a fool of himself, but he must needs call for me to help him, and 'tisn't the first of April. Now, Martin Gay, suppose you were to run away, and they were to carry me off to gaol in your place, how should I feel? To be sure I might abuse Cap'en Dangerfield, who has caused all this bother."

"I think we need not endanger your personal safety, Miss Martha," said the rector; "I shall only bind our friend over to appear at Quarter Sessions, where all this smuggling business will be brought forward; but we must go through the needful depo-

sitions. I must take yours first, Lieutenant Firman."

Frank told, as shortly as possible, how Mr. Gay had sent for him, and he had found the barrels.

Then the miller made his plaint concerning the wheel.

The whole did not take long to write.

"I can account for it," cried Jerusha, rising in her eagerness. "I was standing at the front door of the dairy-house, watching for Mark, about daybreak on the morning after he and Captain Dangerfield left us. We had not gone to bed all night. I saw men come down Mushroom Bank with something on their backs. They seemed to be running for their lives. A short time afterwards some sailors ran past me down the road to Beachton, with nothing on their backs. They must have thrown their bur-

dens into the wheel, to escape from pursuit of some other men who appeared soon after at the top of the bank. I did not stay to watch them, for I was called in at the moment; but I remember wondering whether my sight had deceived me, and who the men could be who were abroad so early."

"That was the very morning that my men pursued some smugglers across the cliffs from Hollow Cove, and lost sight of them at the mill," exclaimed Firman, touching Jerusha's shoulder involuntarily, in his desire to second her. "The first morning of the snow, when we were at Seagull's Nest."

She turned towards him, her face once more crimsoned by excitement, and her eyes full of tears.

"Neither father nor Mark could have had anything to do with them," she said.

"Can we not prove it? Will you help us?"

"I think so—I hope so," was the rejoinder.

"Still the spirits were found on my property, and we will sift the matter to the bottom," said Mr. Gay, resolutely. "But maybe thy watchfulness may save thy father, my little lass. God bless thee!"

"Rushy has some sense, but she didn't get it from you, Martin Gay," said Miss Martha. "And all this trouble for a few gallons of pure spirits, when one is poisoned by the adulterated trash of one's own country!"

"You can still have the good if you choose to pay for it, and have it honestly, Cousin Martha," said Mr. Gay, gravely. "If no so-called honest people had supported the smuggling trade, and if discontented

folk hadn't stirred up the labourers to hawk their goods for 'em, I for one, Mark for another, and Captain Dangerfield for a third, to say nothing of those dependent upon us, wouldn't be now in danger of fines and imprisonment."

"If only we could all be Martin Gays!" said the rector, laying his hand on the miller's, and looking at his fine face with a smile of brotherly love.

"For my part, I would rather be Rushy," shouted Miss Martha. "She's more sense by half. 'One woman among a thousand have I found'—that's Jerusha Gay; 'but a man among all those have I not found.' And if King Solomon had had as much experience of his own sex as of mine, he'd have changed his opinion. At any rate, he'd have said, 'Six of one, half a dozen of the other.'"

Miss Martha had the satisfaction of winding up the magisterial interview with a laugh, and of hearing the miller join in it, in spite of his grievances.

CHAPTER X.

THE GRANGE FOR SALE.

SCARCELY had Mr. Gay recovered from the shock of finding that his dear old friend the mill-wheel had turned against him, when he received a note from the captain of the county gaol. This was to inform him that Captain Dangerfield was seriously ill, and asked to see him.

"Am I to witness two death-beds, Rushy?" he said. "Let me go up to Janey first; maybe she won't live till I come back."

"I think our prayers will be heard, fa-

ther, and she will yet be spared to see Mark," returned Jerusha, hopefully; "her mind is more composed, and wanders less than it did."

"Better prepared for the last journey perhaps. The Lord is ever merciful to the young and weak," said Mr. Gay.

The grief and the frost combined had laid such hold on Janey that all the love and all the nursing seemed incapable of subduing their effects. She was all but insensible when Mr. Gay stooped to kiss her cold white face, and if she heard the prayer he breathed for her, on his knees, at her bedside, she did not respond to it. But she lived, and there was still hope. He turned from her with a faltering step, and when he and his daughter were again alone for a few moments, he repeated his fear that she might have departed from

this world before he returned from his mission. They had now a nurse to aid Jerusha, and the doctor came daily.

"Somebody said the other day smuggling was a *venial* offence," remarked the miller to Jerusha; "if so, and if the consequences of what they call small sins are so great, what of the large ones? But for it Janey might be well, Mark at home, Dangerfield free, and all of us honest and happy."

"May not our Father work some good out of this evil?" asked Jerusha. "I wish I might go with you to-day, and try to comfort Captain Dangerfield."

"My little lass must do her duty at home, while I seek to do mine abroad," replied the miller, with an effort at cheerfulness, as he kissed her tenderly.

"Then will you tell him, from me, in

return for his kind message, that I pray for him every morning and night, and wish him well from my heart? I am sorry now that I ever spoke sharply and inconsiderately of him."

"Thou hast a ready tongue, my girl, and must teach it charity, while bridling it," returned her father.

She watched him drive off with a fearful heart, for each new incident seemed to make her forebode evil. But none happened to him and his sturdy cob, and they reached the county town in safety. He went straight to the gaol, and was received by the Governor, who gave him, in few words, the facts concerning Dangerfield.

"He has worked himself into a fever," he said. "His arm began to mortify, and it was found absolutely necessary to amputate it. The doctor declares he might have

saved it, had he been less restless. And now he will have it that he is dying, though he is doing as well as one can expect. If he gives way as he does he will never be able to be present at the sessions."

"God help him!" ejaculated Mr. Gay, as he was conducted to the prisoner.

He found him where he had seen him before, only he was now in bed. Dangerfield took no notice of Mr. Gay until they were alone, when he turned on his narrow pallet, fixed his eyes upon him, and said—

"You have come quickly, Mr. Gay. You are a good man, worth all the chaplains and preachers. They have cut off my arm, and I am dying. I should be glad if I were sure about the hereafter. I know what you are going to say, but don't interrupt me. Thank you for getting counsel for me, and

giving me a chance, which I shall not live to want. But I wish you to go down to the Grange, and look through the old place before it is sold. I believe the coastguard are already overhauling it, but I suppose they won't quite appropriate the house, even if they find anything contraband in the cellars. I daresay Firman has the management of it, and he won't bring things to extremities if he can help it. There is the train now between this and Muchsandy, which will take you in half an hour within a mile of the Grange. You can be back here in a couple of hours or so. I haven't a friend in the world but you and Mark, and if there's anything left when all is sold, I shall leave it to Mark. Small compensation, for I've been his ruin. He was a very good fellow when he went his first voyage with me. And your daughter? What does

she say? Does she hate me, as her eyes seemed to say she did?"

"No; she told me to say that she prayed for you night and morning, and wished you well with all her heart."

"And she won't marry Firman! But no matter now, for I'm dying. If I had known her before perhaps I should have been different. But no, I shouldn't. I've been always a black sheep—very black indeed."

"You may yet be washed as white as snow," the miller ventured to put in.

"Yes, yes. I've been reading about it in the Bible you left me, and the chaplain has been talking about it. But I've led far too wild a life to make what they call a pious death, and I don't believe in sudden conversions."

"I came not to call the righteous, but

sinners to repentance," said Mr. Gay, earnestly.

"Just take down my instructions about the Grange, and I'll sign them," returned Dangerfield, irritably. "Then, when you come back, I'll make my will. Confound it, to think that a mean, cowardly Preventive man should have cost me my right arm! Never to be good for anything in this world, if I live, and not knowing what will become of me if I die."

Mr. Gay was sorely tempted to "preach" again, but he saw that Dangerfield was eager for his earthly affairs to be attended to, so he strove to forget those two "deaths" he dreaded, and to attend to the prisoner's wishes. Pen and ink were at hand, so he wrote at his dictation, that he wished the Grange to be sold to pay off the mortgages upon it, and to defray the expenses of his

coming trial. The doctor arrived just when this was completed, and he called the Governor to witness it. Mr. Gay hurried off with the paper, scarcely knowing if it were valid or not, and took the train to Much-sandy, the railway having lately been opened.

When he arrived there he went first to the lawyer who ruled over the little town, and who was supposed to know something of the Dangerfield property, and gave him such instructions as he deemed necessary. Then he proceeded to the Grange, where he found Firman, who told him that he had received orders to search the premises. Harding, the bailiff, had not been discovered, and the house was still in the keeping of his deaf old wife.

Firman had taken advantage of the experience he had gained under Dangerfield's

guidance, and had explored the cellars. While doing so he had discovered an underground passage, which extended almost to the coast, and which must have been a means of ingress and egress to the Grange before the erection of the coastguard station and employment of revenue cruisers. Even in these later days it had probably served as a storehouse, and would, doubtless, have received the load brought by Mr. Hasluck's waggon, but for Firman's interference. It was evident, therefore, that the Grange had been a smuggling centre for many years, although all traces of the traffic were removed from it when Firman and his men explored the premises.

"If as much cunning and cleverness had been expended on a good cause instead of a bad one, the world would be better than it is," said Mr. Gay, when Firman had shown

him the various subterranean contrivances that he had brought to light for the concealment of both men and liquors.

They afterwards consulted together as to the best means of benefiting Dangerfield, and how this could be effected without any infringement of the law, which, said Martin Gay, is not "a terror to good workers, but to the evil."

They were so engaged when Solomon Hasluck joined them. His manner was stiff to both, and the temper of the man was apparent. He was unforgiving, and not likely to forget Firman's rivalship or Mr. Gay's independence. Hearing that the former was in possession of the Grange, he had come to inquire if the place were to be sold, and the miller was able to give him the desired information.

"Then I shall buy it," said Solomon,

stiffly. "I may turn it to account, but nobody else could."

"A lone man like you!" ejaculated Mr. Gay, unadvisedly. "What will you do with it?"

"It is a safe investment," was the curt reply.

"You know best, Cousin Solomon," rejoined the miller. "Is Mary Anne Hasluck at home? I must look in upon her before I leave. I want to carry her back to Janey, for it is her duty to see her before she 'goes hence and is no more seen.'"

"Won't you come to Hill Farm first?" asked Solomon.

"No, thank you. I must hurry back to Cap'en Dangerfield. This new railway has its uses, though I stood out against it. After all, steam may be God's way of bringing the

ends of the earth together, for 'tis nothing short of miraculous."

So saying, he made the best of his way to Kimberlin Cottage, and Firman and Solomon were left together, sole occupants of the dilapidated Grange.

"They tell me that you are engaged to Jerusha Gay," said Solomon, abruptly, though with his usual solemnity.

"No engagement exists between us, Mr. Hasluck," replied Firman, coldly. "Still I hope she may one day be my wife, though at present she gives me no encouragement."

"Then she is turning round again, and when she knows I've got the Grange . . . . I don't mean to give her up, Lieutenant Firman."

"Nor I, Mr. Solomon Hasluck."

The rivals stood a moment there in the

old wainscoted dining-room, looking at each other. They were a strange contrast—the one elderly, dark, long-faced, puritanical; the other young, fair, open as the day. Yet were both resolute men, and equally determined to carry their point, only Solomon would do so whether Jerusha loved him or not, Firman only if his affections were returned.

"You can make known that I mean to purchase this old place," said Solomon, turning on his heel, with a solemn bow. "I am going at once to Lawyer Holdfast, to complete the bargain."

"I wish you joy of it," said Firman; adding, when he had left, "I shall never believe in woman more if Rushy turns to him. But he is rich, and I have nothing. And then, my mother!"

Mr. Gay found Mrs. Hasluck overwhelmed

with sick children, and Kimberlin Cottage as untidy as usual. Still she was naturally so distressed at the account of Janey that she determined to get a friend to take care of the children for one night at least, and promised to join the miller at the county town, if he would wait there until the last train came in.

He agreed to this, and having just seen the children, and taken a hasty mouthful of bread and cheese, he hastened back to the station.

"I am glad we're never likely to have a railroad to Beachton. I never was so out of breath in my life," he muttered, as he jumped into the train.

Nevertheless, he was with Dangerfield again in about forty minutes; he would have been at least three or four hours in reaching him had he driven. He found him

in a state of great excitement, for he had been calculating space and time by his wishes, which were more rapid even than steam. When he heard that Solomon was likely to purchase the Grange he called him a "miserly old humbug," but added that he was welcome to it, provided he came down handsomely, and helped him to counsel and defence.

"The chaplain has made my will during your absence," he then informed Mr. Gay. "I have left Mark anything that may remain after the revenue has fleeced me, and you are paid, and the lawyers."

Mr. Gay restrained himself from adding that there could not possibly be anything left, since there was not enough to pay the liabilities, even when all was sold. But he said, instead, that he hoped to see the testator, in the course of time, a wiser and hap-

pier man, and capable of managing his own affairs.

"I shall have none to manage. Let me alone to die here in this prison. If only I had been killed by a bullet in my *Sea Serpent*—struck down at once, while the waves were roaring, and the guns firing, and the excitement of a sea-fight forcing away the horrors of death, I should not have minded. But to be struck down by a Government assassin in a smuggler's cave, and then brought to trial for resisting iniquitous measures—I say it is horrible! most horrible! Mr. Gay, where is Jerusha?"

"Nursing Janey, who is, we fear, 'sick unto death,' and in terrible pain both of body and mind."

"On Mark's account?"

"Yes; but God knows best."

Dangerfield groaned, turned towards the

wall, and was silent. He spoke no more to anyone that day, and none knew whether the soul of the violent, moody man was awakened, or still impenitent.

CHAPTER XI.

CAPTAIN BOWLES FINDS A RELATIVE.

SOME little time after Mr. Gay had left home, Janey grew so excited that Jerusha found it almost impossible to manage her. The nurse was not of much use. There were few trained nurses in those days, and she was certainly not one of the few, so Mr. Gay's kind intentions in procuring her for the general good were scarcely fulfilled. She was for rousing the patient, and compelling her to exert herself, while Jerusha knew not what was best. The doctor was equally at fault, for doctors

are only human, and cannot look into the mainsprings, either of body or mind. The only person who seemed to understand and benefit Janey was Mrs. Firman; but Jerusha was too proud to truckle to that lady, and did not care to send for her, much as she wished she would come of her own accord.

While she was in this doubt and anxiety, she was told that Captain Bowles wished to see her. As he was the general purveyor of news, she thought he might have something important to communicate, and went to him. His business was soon told. He had come to offer anything he had—himself, his purse, or his house—for the use of his favourite Rushy.

"I have no one belonging to me—at least that I'm aware of at present. That Mrs. Firman is so confounded close about

her Bowles, or else who knows but I might find some sort of a relative?—for a man does like to have one of his own kith and kin to inherit his fortune, say what you will. If he's married, now, his wife comes in for it, and he hasn't the trouble of making a will. I'd as soon make my coffin as my will, or I should have made it long ago in your favour. I wish I was married. Miss Martha won't have me, and what's the use of a store of cash, when one has enough besides for one's daily needs? You won't be above using it, my dear?"

"Not if I want it, Captain Bowles," replied Jerusha, with tears in her eyes, as she held out her hand to her friend. "But we are not quite ruined yet. I must not stay from Janey, she is so excited, and we don't know what to do with her."

"Who have you to help you, my dear?"

"Only Nurse Badger, and she is so rough! No one suits Janey but Mrs. Firman, who is gentle and quiet, and soothes her even when I fail."

"Then why don't she stop with her? I daresay she would come if you sent for her. Ah, I see how the land lies! Confounded proud, secret woman. The lieutenant's different, my dear; but then he's as poor—as poor—why, as lieutenants always are and always will be. I'll see about it."

Captain Bowles bustled off, and bustled up to the villa, where he found Mrs. Firman, alone as usual.

"There's Mrs. Mark Gay," he began, puffing with his haste, "all beside herself, and nobody can calm her. *Our* Rushy says you always soothe her, and, to be sure, ma'am, you're silent enough for anything—a wonderful woman for that, I must say,

for generally your sex beat us at the conversational game, and——"

"Poor child, I will go to her," interrupted Mrs. Firman, and instantly left the room to put her walking things on.

"If only she would say what Bowles she knew!" ejaculated the Captain. "She reminds me, and yet she doesn't. I heard that the man *she* ran off with was a Colonel Peeke. I wish I could forget 'em all, but I can't, though 'tis nearly half a century ago. Where on earth is Miss Martha?"

It would have distressed him to know that Miss Martha was keeping out of his way—yet such was the case. However, he was consoled by the re-appearance of Mrs. Firman, with whom he returned to the mill, chuckling at his management. He talked incessantly, but elicited few replies. At last, as they approached the mill, he

put a question that seemed to startle her into sudden animation.

"Did any of the Bowles family that you knew chance to live near a village called Nolton-cum-Berry, ma'am?" he said, pausing in his walk.

"Your reason for asking, sir?" she answered, when she had striven to recover herself from an evident surprise.

"If you wasn't so close I should be happy to tell you," replied the Captain. "Did you chance to be acquainted with a Colonel Peeke that had a place in those parts?"

The Captain had hit the right nail now. Mrs. Firman's face betrayed alarm as well as surprise.

"I—I may have heard the name. But why do you press these inquiries upon me, a stranger to you? Why annoy me with

these questions?" she said, with much agitation.

"Because I should be glad to know if any members of that family are still living," he replied, his face darkening.

He saw that she almost staggered through the gate and garden, until she reached the porch, where she sank down on one of the seats. He opened the door as noiselessly as he could, and went into the hall, whither she was compelled to follow, as she trembled too much to mount the staircase, towards which she wished to walk. There was no one in the hall, and he drew forward the bee-hive chair nearer the fire and offered it to her. She sat down, muttering a few words concerning the cold Spring. He also seated himself near her, in the miller's chair, and looked searchingly into her face. By degrees she regained her self-possession,

and was about to rise in order to seek Jerusha, when he detained her by placing his hand firmly on her arm.

"Was your maiden name Mary Bowles?" he asked, with a still, strange severity, unlike his usual manner.

"Why, why do you ask?" she stammered.

"Because, if it was, I am your brother John!" he replied, fixing his eyes sternly upon her, and speaking low.

"My brother John!" she repeated, after a pause and off her guard, while her whole body quivered with nervous terror. "He has been dead years and years; he was drowned when I—when I was quite a young woman."

"No, he was not. He was reported drowned, but was picked up by an American vessel. But when he returned to his home

he found it deserted. He was told that his parents were dead—killed, it was said, by the loss of their only daughter, the beautiful but——"

"Hush! for pity's sake, say no more!" cried Mrs. Firman, covering her face with her hand, and bursting into a fit of sobbing so hysterical that she frightened the Captain, who still held one arm.

"Don't, pray don't, or you will be heard!" he said, trembling himself, as if struck by a sudden palsy. "If you are my sister Mary, say so, and let us at least look the dread past in the face."

Captain Bowles was reputed a warm-hearted, but hot-tempered man. He could be severe as well, and though his voice faltered, his manner and face were stern. The white-haired veteran was a young man again, standing, in imagin-

ation, on the threshold of a desolate home.

All Mrs. Firman's self-command, together with the unnatural restraint of years, deserted her, and her spirit shrank before the just indignation of one whom she had not seen since her childhood, but whom she acknowledged to be her brother. She also was a girl again, deserting that home for ever, with a worthless lover, and leaving parents and happiness behind.

At last she slowly withdrew her hand from before her face, and glanced appealingly at her companion.

"I was Mary Bowles, and you—are you—can you be my brother John?"

"Yes; and you are living under an assumed name?" he added severely.

"No, no. *He* deserted me—left me cruelly, promising to come back. I waited,

hoping against hope; he never came. God knows I suffered poverty and sorrow enough!"

"And then?" said the Captain.

"I married Mr. Firman, who died in one short year, leaving me with Frank."

Her voice sank to a whisper, and she again put her hand before her face. Captain Bowles remained some time without speaking. Gossip and garrulity had vanished before the realities of the past. Was this the young sister whom he had last seen when he, then a lieutenant in the navy, left home to join his ship? Was this pale, calm, silent woman the once beautiful Mary Bowles? Was this the girl of whom he had heard as a wilful, undutiful daughter, who had hastened the death of her parents?

It was, and he and she were sole survivors of the family, once respectable, the

honest fame and name of which she had sullied by leaving her native place with a man of doubtful character, who had professed to love her.

"Did you ever see our parents again, Mary?" he asked at last. "Ever receive their pardon?"

"Never! Never!" she replied. "You will not make my story known? You will not tell Frank? He loves and honours me now, and I have worked and striven to bring him up; but he would despise me if he knew all. Oh, my brother!"

She rose suddenly, and fell on her knees before the Captain, clasping her hands, and gazing upon him with streaming eyes. He was about to raise her, when they were suddenly recalled from that "dead past" to the "living present," by the entrance of Jerusha.

She was about to retreat when she saw so unexpected a sight.

"Come in, Rushy," said Captain Bowles, as Mrs. Firman rose hastily, and turned towards the fire.

Jerusha had never before heard him speak in so harsh a voice, and she obeyed timidly, still remaining at a distance.

"Tilly told me you and Mrs. Firman were here," she said, glancing from the Captain's stern face to Mrs. Firman's back, as she leaned her head against the mantelpiece.

"We are here, as you see," he replied, hesitating a moment. Then, as if suddenly resolving, he added hastily, "A strange discovery has been made between us, Rushy, and the sooner it is public the better. We find that we are brother and sister!"

Jerusha started in extreme surprise; then

came forward with wondering congratulations on her lips, which were stayed at the sound of Mrs. Firman's suppressed sobs, and the sight of the Captain's stern face. Still she held out her hands to her fast friend, and said, "Oh, I am so glad!"

Then she looked from one to the other, as if asking an explanation.

"Brother and sister!" repeated the Captain, emphatically. "Born of the same parents, in the same village, just as you and Mark were. But, you see, I went to sea—like him, too—and was said to be drowned. When I came back, after some years, I found my parents dead, and my sister—well, Mary, you were far away, you know, believing me dead, and I could not find you. I have been tossing about the world ever since, without kith or kin, and now, thanks to your good friends, Rushy, I discover that

I have a widowed sister, and a nephew, who —who is as fine a fellow as there is in all England!"

Captain Bowles's voice faltered, and Jerusha's tender heart and quick feelings responded to it.

"Oh, how happy you will be now!" she exclaimed. "Dear Captain Bowles, I am so thankful, and everyone else will be glad!"

She looked at Mrs. Firman, longing to say some kind words to her also, but that lady was still leaning her head on her arm against the mantelpiece, as if silently gazing into the fire, and striving to appear as placid under these remarkable circumstances as she had heretofore been.

"Yet," Jerusha thought, "she was on her knees when I came in. Perhaps her heart is too deeply stirred for words."

"Will you not say a word to our Rushy, sister Mary? She is hankering to wish you joy," said the Captain, with the same harsh ring in his voice.

It all seemed very strange to Jerusha.

"Thank you," said Mrs. Firman at last, surmounting with some incredible effort her emotion, and facing the excited girl, who felt, apparently, more joy than did either brother or sister. "Thank you."

She held out a listless hand, which Jerusha seized and kissed fervently, wishing the next moment that she had not ventured to touch so limp and cold a member. She little knew the fire that was burning within the seeming iceberg before her; neither did the hot-headed, out-spoken Captain, who had difficulty in restraining his temper. Still her tears and broken voice made him

long for a more genuine reconciliation, though he had not sufficient power over himself to bring it about.

But Jerusha perceived intuitively that it was not all happiness between them, though neither she nor anyone else ever knew their previous history; for neither the Captain nor Mrs. Firman made any further disclosures at any subsequent period.

Yet in spite of Mrs. Firman's apparent dislike of herself, Jerusha felt impelled to say something that should express her own sentiments on what should have been so blessed a reunion.

"It is just as if Mark were to stay away until father was dead, and Janey and I alone in the world. Oh! God forbid that we should be so long separated!"

The thought brought the ready tears to her bright eyes, and she clasped her hands

and glanced upwards. The brother and sister looked from her to one another. She had forgotten Mark's faults, and the trouble he had brought upon them, in her great sisterly love. They, made callous by years and absence, could remember only the one blot on their life's escutcheon. The rough old Captain's heart was suddenly moved by a comparison that came home to him. He rose from the chair he had occupied from the time of their entrance into the house, put his arm round his sister and kissed her.

"Mary! sister! you were but a child when we parted, and the prettiest I ever saw. We are old people now. We will begin a new life together. May God forgive us all our past sins!"

Mrs. Firman's assumed composure gave way, and she covered her face with her

hands, and sobbed. Jerusha stole out of the room, and left them to complete a reconciliation so marvellously begun.

CHAPTER XII.

"MY NEPHEW! MY NEPHEW!"

IT was very late when Mr. Gay returned to the mill, after his interview with Captain Dangerfield. Mrs. Joe Hasluck's arrival with him created more of consternation than pleasure, for Janey had just fallen asleep, after a day of terrible excitement, and Jerusha had consented to take some rest. Mrs. Firman had, unasked, and with few words, requested to be allowed to sit up with Janey, and was keeping her silent watch when the travellers arrived. It was thought advisable for Mrs. Hasluck not

to see her daughter that night, and Jerusha, therefore, relinquished her intended bed to her guest, preferring solitude on the parlour sofa to company under the circumstances, or to the occupation of Mark's old room.

She was nearly worn out with anxiety; still she made Mrs. Hasluck welcome, and managed to provide her and her father with a substantial meal. The late events had served to intensify Mrs. Hasluck's natural despondency and complaining, and Jerusha had to recall her lost cheerfulness in order to console and re-assure her.

It was nearly midnight before she and her father were left alone to discuss the unusual occurrences of the day. Mr. Gay had to recount all that had passed between him and Dangerfield, and Jerusha the marvellous discovery of the relationship between Captain Bowles and Mrs. Firman.

"Let us thank God for our neighbours' good fortune, if we get none ourselves," said the miller. "Lieutenant Firman will cut you out, Rushy, as the Captain's heir; not that I suppose the old gentleman has much beyond his pension?"

"Do unusual events always change one, father?" asked Jerusha. "You would not have known Captain Bowles. Before he left the house he sent for me, and met me in the passage. Instead of being hasty, he was quiet, and his very face was altered. He told me that he was going at once to Cousin Martha, to tell her of his strange discovery, and then straight to Muchsandy to see his nephew Frank. He spoke proudly, father, when he said that. Then he begged, as a personal favour, that I would let Mrs. Firman take my place with Janey for a few hours, as she wished to avoid

meeting anyone while she was so much agitated. I could understand that, and I called Nurse Badger out of Janey's room, and we went together for a minute into another, while Mrs. Firman went to Janey, who was glad to see her. She is a wonderful nurse, father, and quite puts me to shame. I left them for about an hour, and then went into Janey's room. Mrs. Firman was knitting, just as usual, in the twilight, and soothing Janey as if she were a baby, but I am sure she was still crying. She whispered to me that she would sit up with Janey, if I would allow her; and so I prepared everything, and sent Nurse Badger to bed, who is more plague than profit. It puzzles me to know how they can be brother and sister, and why it should have come out here so strangely."

"God's ways are past finding out, my

little lass. Let us pray that this may lead to everlasting life."

And the miller, as was his wont, knelt with his child, and asked for the divine blessing and guidance on the results of the events of the past day. Most especially he entreated his Father in heaven to turn the heart of Captain Dangerfield, and to have pity upon Mark for His dear Son's sake.

The following morning, after a restless night on her sofa, Jerusha was awakened by the first sunbeams stealing into the parlour through the muslin curtains. Noiselessly as they, she stole upstairs into Janey's room. She found Janey still in uneasy slumber, and Mrs. Firman's head had dropped on the pillow beside her. She thought she had never before seen two faces near each other so very pale. There were traces of tears on the widow's cheeks,

and Jerusha's warm heart soon melted into pity.

"I wish I could be a comfort to her," she thought. "Perhaps I might have been had she fancied me. But I would never bring disgrace on him or her. Poor Janey! she has to suffer for the faults of Mark, but no one else shall if I can help it, dearly, dearly as I love him."

As she stood, with these thoughts in her mind, looking down upon the sleepers, Mrs. Firman awoke.

Rushy felt almost guilty at being found watching, but Mrs. Firman made no remark. She merely rose quietly, whispered that she would now return to the villa, took up the inevitable knitting, which had fallen upon the bed, and passed from the room like a shadow, motioning not to be followed.

"She might have kissed Janey, or—or even me," thought Rushy.

But she had scarcely disappeared when Janey also awoke, the ever-repeated "Has he come?" on her lips.

"Not yet, darling, but some one else has; your mother is here," said Rushy, bending over her.

"Ah!" sighed Janey. "I dreamed that we were together, Mark and I—on the mill-dam—no, on the bridge."

This was the most connected sentence Janey had uttered for some time, and Jerusha's heart leaped for joy. But there was no expression of pleasure at the advent of her mother, which showed, more than anything, that the one prevailing idea had swallowed up every other. In excitement or comparative calm it was Mark—ever Mark. Still she was patient as regarded

her bodily sufferings, and when Jerusha called the nurse to assist in moving her, by the aid of the sheet, she uttered neither plaint nor groan. She could now, however, move a little herself, which would have been a good sign had increase of strength come with it. But all the medicine and all the nourishment, hourly administered, did not seem to diminish the weakness, and the doctor feared it would end in a rapid decline.

The meeting between Mrs. Joe Hasluck and her daughter was, after all, very affecting; for when danger and death hover near, maternal and filial affections are strongest. It was even salutary; for the unrestrained grief of the mother brought tears to Janey's dry eyes, and they served to ease the bewildered brain.

Jerusha wisely left them together, and

took the opportunity to have a talk with Miss Martha, who came soon after breakfast, to make inquiries and discuss events.

Mr. Gay had already ridden off to Sandport to meet his lawyer, in order to consult upon the measures to be taken for all parties concerned in the trial about to come off at Quarter Sessions, so Miss Martha had Jerusha "once more all to herself," as she expressed it.

"Always thought the Cap'en and Mrs. Firman were relations," she said, "but didn't suppose they'd turn out brother and sister. More underground there than even a pig could poke up! but that's no affair of mine. What is, is that I shall be rid of 'em both, for the Cap'en says she shall live with him, and he can't want two women.

"'You'll find her a quiet, ladylike companion,' said I, thinking to myself

that he was blustering enough for two.

"'Yes, she won't make too much noise,' said he, as meek as Moses, but he never told me where they came from.

"It's my opinion that their father was hanged, or something of the sort, and that's why she holds herself so high above us poor innocent smugglers, and that's why he's so particularly secret. None so hard upon others as those who have been hit themselves, my dear."

"Oh, Cousin Martha! I am sure Lieutenant Firman's grandfather was not hanged," exclaimed Jerusha, warmly.

"I didn't say his grandfather, but her father, Rushy," laughed Miss Martha. "Most likely he was a smuggler, and the pious rulers of this uncommon religious land weren't above hanging people for very moderate offences then, so the old gentle-

man mightn't have been so bad after all; anyhow the lieutenant don't take after him. Well, it does one's heart good to see you laugh again, Rushy; your face has been as long and yellow as a stubberd lately. Better wash your hands of everybody, like me. Now only think what my feelings would be if I'd been in love with the Cap'en. Well done, Rushy, the face is a quarraner once more, and a dimpled one too."

Miss Martha was delighted to hear Jerusha laugh merrily again; for in spite of her resolve not to appear anxious, she felt her friend's troubles deeply. It is not always those who look the saddest that suffer most. Sometimes the merry countenance hides the melancholy heart. Not that Miss Martha was melancholy, for that was not in her nature; but she was sincerely attached

both to Jerusha and her father. Therefore, when the former laughed, she got up and gave her quite a motherly hug, the effect of which was contrary to what she intended, since it caused tears to mingle with the smiles on poor Rushy's face.

"Have you seen Mrs. Firman, Cousin Martha?" asked Jerusha, to turn attention from herself.

"No. She went to bed when she came home. I suppose she was kind and polite to you in your own house?" was the reply.

"She was very good to Janey, but I don't think she likes me, Cousin Martha."

"She wouldn't like an angel that Frank loved, Rushy. She is jealous of you, that's all."

While the colour caused by this allusion still burnt on Jerusha's cheeks, Frank Firman and Captain Bowles came to the door.

"Speak of the old gentleman," began Miss Martha, as the Captain bustled in, his natural manner returned, and his step as brisk as a boy's.

"Ay, here he is, and here's his tail," he said, pointing to Frank. "He knows it all. He knows that I'm his unworthy old uncle. Where's his mother? Where's my sister? Where's Mr. Gay?"

"Bless us all, how many more do you want? Here am I, and here's Rushy. We used to be enough for you," said Miss Martha.

"So you are—so you were. But now I've got somebody of my own flesh and blood. My nephew! my nephew! Why, ma'am, I'm as proud of him as if I had known him ever since he was born."

While this was passing, Firman was holding Jerusha's hand, and telling her that he

had just parted from her father and Solomon Hasluck the previous day, when Captain Bowles had appeared at the Grange, and claimed him as his nephew. He had heard his mother speak of an uncle who had been drowned, and who was many years older than she was, but beyond this he knew little of her family. Great, then, had been his astonishment when the Captain told him that he had suspected the relationship ever since he (Frank) had casually mentioned his mother's maiden name, but he wished to make sure of it before he declared it.

Jerusha was stammering forth congratulations, and striving to appear at ease, when Captain Bowles turned suddenly towards her and Frank, with the words—

"He will cut you out, Rushy. Flesh and blood first, you know. But we must make

it joint-stock—joint-stock, and I needn't make a will at all, you see."

Jerusha stood in the midst of her three friends, once more Firman's "red, red rose." She could not misunderstand Captain Bowles, and, indeed, was too natural to pretend to do so. Neither could she succeed in withdrawing her hand from her lover's grasp. But she had made up her mind.

"I am so glad you have found relatives, dear Captain Bowles," she said. "Thank you for having thought of me, though I may die first. Look at Janey! But—but you must have other intentions for me now. We are all smugglers, you know, and father says we must keep clear of involving honest people in our troubles. He will have to be judged for Mark, and you—you," turning to Firman, "will have to appear against

him. The law is hard, though father says it is just."

"Hard as the nether millstone, which is a simile your obstinate father understands, I take it, if I don't," interrupted Miss Martha.

"And," continued Jerusha, her voice trembling, "I mean to hold to father and stand by him as long as I live. He wants me most."

"I think not, my Rushy," whispered Firman.

But Jerusha's roses suddenly paled, and the tears crept into the bright eyes. She was in earnest, and her resolution cost her much. They all knew how steadfast and staunch she was, and felt that it was useless to combat it. Frank Firman acknowledged it with pain, but he was as staunch and steadfast as she.

"I think I had better go to Janey now," she said, with some difficulty, and glanced entreatingly at Frank.

"It is a useless struggle, dear," he whispered, as he released her hand, and she slipped away, leaving the trio to their various remarks and reflections.

"It is all pride!" said Miss Martha. "She's as good as gold, but as proud as a peacock."

CHAPTER XIII.

QUARTER SESSIONS.

THERE was a good deal of excitement throughout the county when the smuggling case was to be tried at the Quarter Sessions. A strong feeling in favour of the smugglers existed, and even Captain Dangerfield had his sympathisers. Many of the respectable gentry were compelled to own, in secret, that they had not been above drinking smuggled spirits; while the silks and laces of the ladies were in numberless instances very suspicious. But the Queen's counsel and his witnesses

were strong, and justice must be done.

When Captain Dangerfield appeared in the prisoner's box on the day of the trial, he excited more compassion than he deserved. Criminals often do, though it is an error on the right side. His dread of death had not killed him, neither had the weakness consequent on the amputation of his arm. But he looked thin and worn, and the dark heavy face had a restless, hunted expression, which drew forth the sympathy of many of the spectators. The Town Hall was crowded, and almost every individual whose acquaintance we have made in these pages was present, either as concerned in the trial, or as auditor and spectator of it.

It will not be necessary to take short-hand notes of what the counsel for the prosecution and the defence said in their

lengthy and wordy speeches, or to detail the conclusive evidence of the officers of the *Invincible* or of the coastguard. Firman gave his in a manly, straightforward manner, implicating others as little as possible.

There could be no doubt that the *Sea Serpent* was a smuggling vessel, and that the prisoner was her captain; neither was there any doubt as to the affray in the cave, and the goods found there; but it became necessary to account for the intermediate days between the capture of the ship and the encounter in the cave, and this involved the inmates of The Bluffs.

It was well known that Dangerfield had made a tool of Mark, but there was no positive evidence that Mark was engaged either in the *Sea Serpent* or the cave when the Captain was taken prisoner; for Levi had been stolidly persistent not to implicate

his young master. Of course Mark's disappearance told against him. The miller had made no secret of the fact that Dangerfield had been his son's guest while the *Sea Serpent* was captured, or indeed, of any other particular with which he was acquainted; and in spite of Firman's resolute silence touching his presence at The Bluffs on that especial evening, it became known that Jerusha and Janey had assisted in harbouring the prisoner, and they were both summoned.

Janey could not appear, but Jerusha had accompanied her father, Miss Martha, and Tilly to the court of justice, and sat amongst them, listening eagerly to all that passed, and observed by many.

During the examination of various witnesses, Jerusha's heart beat tumultuously, for although Dangerfield had been the bane of her

family, she felt an irresistible compassion for him, and prayed secretly that he might be pitifully dealt with. But when she heard Firman's conclusive evidence, she knew that he must be found guilty, and she unjustly blamed her lover for telling the truth one moment, and secretly thanked him for his moderation the next.

When it was her turn to be examined, she felt the natural timidity of a young girl at being called from her father's side and placed in a conspicuous position, where she became the gazing-stock of so many inquisitive people; and she found herself wondering how it was that there were women amongst those who came to hear a fellow-creature condemned to punishment.

"Tell the truth, my little maid, as before God," said her father, when she was summoned, and she did so.

Every eye was fixed upon the frank, fearless, yet modest face, but none more intently than Captain Dangerfield's. Something like a smile flitted over his gloomy countenance as he watched her. Firman also gazed on her with all a lover's anxiety and pride, and Solomon Hasluck, from a distant corner, said to himself, "She will come round when all this is over."

Even the counsel had not the courage to brow-beat a young girl with those soft, bright, honest hazel eyes and that charming play of features. She was examined and cross-examined, but she had nothing save the truth to tell. She was encouraged, when her voice faltered, by the kindly nod and smile of Mr. Worthington—who sat amongst the magistrates—and by her father's whispered prayers. She did not venture even to glance at Firman, who stood

amongst the witnesses for the prosecution.

Little was gleaned from her beyond what was already known. She had been at her brother's house when the prisoner came there in his company. Her sister-in-law had prepared a bed for him, and he had slept there, and had remained during the whole of the following day, concealed at The Bluffs.

"And you harboured a man you knew to be a smuggler?" asked the counsel.

"Our guest? My brother's friend? Of course we did," she replied, glancing at Dangerfield.

He smiled gratefully, and there was a buzz of applause.

"And your brother went off with the prisoner?"

"Yes."

"And you have not seen him since?"

"No."

"Did you know that your brother was in league with the prisoner?"

"Not exactly; I only suspected it. But my father had no suspicion."

There was another hum of applause at this unasked-for assertion.

"Was that the last time you saw the prisoner?"

"Yes, until to-day."

"You have had reason to suspect that smuggled goods were received at Beachton Mill. On what occasions?"

"Once, when my brother had been absent for several weeks, I heard sounds at night, which I have since learnt was the dragging of the mill-pond; and another time I saw men coming over the hill with burdens on their backs, which they must have dropped into the mill-wheel, as they re-appeared

without them. But my father knew nothing of this."

Here Jerusha was requested merely to answer the questions put, and not forestall her father's examination.

"God bless thee, my lass," murmured the miller, while Miss Martha wiped her eyes.

"Did you know whether it was the prisoner or his men that dragged the pond, or dropped the burden?"

"Certainly not. I knew nothing of Captain Dangerfield's proceedings, nor did my father."

There was much applause at this third resolute attempt to exonerate her father from blame, and Jerusha, who had never before been in a court of justice, looked round surprised. The bright eyes and brighter cheeks elicited more approbation, for she had, at last, met Firman's fixed

glance, and the truant colour flushed up like the aurora. Sundry other questions followed concerning Mark and the miller's men, which she had sense enough to answer with discretion; and when her examination was over, she had the satisfaction of feeling that she had not been compelled to criminate any of her friends.

She sat down amidst much cheering, and sheltered herself behind Miss Martha's voluminous shawl.

If cheers accompanied Jerusha's examination, laughter followed Tilly's. What between Mr. Gay's exhortations to truthfulness, and Levi's "Doan't thee let thay chaps gammon thee, Tilly; huold thy tongue if thou canst, vor thay be downdacious fellers," she was much puzzled what to say.

But as her evidence was expected to be conclusive concerning the smuggling carried

on at the mill, she was much badgered by the counsel. She was, however, a match for them, for she understood about as much of their fine English as they of her broad Saxon, and between them there were some curious passes at arms.

Tilly was very smartly dressed for the occasion, wearing her best yellow shawl, and a bonnet much trimmed with red ribbons; a bonnet purchased for this, her first public appearance, and of which she had said, "The plainerer the genteelerer. I wants a baw before an' a baw behind, and a pooffin all aroun'." She felt that Levi's "eye was upon her," and tried to "hold her tongue," prefacing her effort by saying to herself, "I bean't a-gwain to zay nothen' agen measter."

She was, nevertheless, compelled to admit that she had seen smuggled goods of all sorts taken for concealment to the mill and

dairy-house, and thrown into the pond. But she swore positively that this had only taken place within the last eight or nine months, and during the time that Mark was either confined to his bed-room or sofa, or absent for his marriage.

"'Twor after thay Preventers coom spyin' about, and measter an' Measter Mark knawed nothen' about it," she persisted in saying.

"Then who did know? Did you recognise the prisoner?" asked the counsel for the prosecution.

"Noa. Never zeed he wi' thay smugglers."

"Levi Tuck, or Job Tuck, or Chivers, or any of Mr. Gay's men? Now think. Did you see them? Remember you are on oath."

"Twor zoo dark as pitch, an' I never zee nobody. I haan't got cat's eyes."

"Then how did you know the smugglers were about?"

"I heerd 'em talk, and drow the kags into the pond, and knowed as they warn't our volk."

"Why didn't you tell your master?"

"'Twarnt my place to mel wi' things as didn't consarn me, an' he wur alays vast azleep."

During Tilly's examination Mr. Gay was in a constant fidget, now trying to catch her averted eyes; now on the point of rising to reprove her for not speaking the truth. But Miss Martha held him fast with the words,

"Bless the man, he's got St. Vitus's dance. But I don't suppose St. Vitus, whoever he was, would have danced to the treadmill of his own accord. Anyhow, he'd been cured of his dancing if he did."

No cross-questioning could elicit from Tilly

the name of one single actor in the smuggling work.

"Ov course thay wur all smugglers, and she never melled wi' thay no more than wi' thay Preventers. Thay were oone zo bad as the 'tother."

Tilly was as much astonished by the laughter she caused as Jerusha had been by the applause, but she took care not to look round lest she should catch her master's eye, and when her examination was over, and she was told that she might sit down, she was careful to keep as far from him as she could. But she had her reward in an approving glance from Levi, whose eyes had a gleam of sense in them for the first time since they had been in his head.

"Lawk, Miss, what a clatter they do make when oone do goo vor to speak," she said to Miss Martha. "Thay chaps wi' the

big wigs be like the picturs o' the lions in measter's gurt Bible, and thay doan't knaw how to consart themselves no other than jackasses."

Almost all the men connected with the mill had been summoned, and their evidence tended to throw the blame upon Dangerfield, and to show that Mark had been his tool. It was evident to everyone that Mr. Gay was innocent of all complicity. Still there were the barrels found in the mill-wheel, for which, according to law, he must pay the penalty.

Here Chivers turned Queen's evidence. It was to Mr. Gay and his daughter that he and his family owed food, and probably life, during the late hard Winter, and their good example and pious counsel had not been without effect on him. He confessed that he was one of the men seen by Jerusha on

Mushroom Bank, and that he and his companions, being pursued by the coastguard from Seagull's Nest, had cast their illicit barrels into the mill-wheel, intending to carry them off the following night, the frost having prevented their throwing them into the pond, which was a sheet of ice. He did not say that he had cunningly invited Firman to rest in his hut while this was effected, or that the discovery of the cave and the disappearance of his men after the smugglers was the result of the lieutenant's delay. He admitted, however, that the coastguard had been too much on the alert to allow of the abstraction of the goods from the wheel, and that the smugglers had been obliged to take flight the next day without them, leaving him (Chivers) behind ; he being only a poor fisherman, hired by them to dispose of their prey.

Nothing was to be got out of Levi. He evaded all direct answers with the obtuse cunning of his class, and when examined concerning the boat which Lieutenant Firman had seen put off from Hollow Cove, swore that he had seen no boat, which was true, as he was in the cave at the time.

It is unnecessary here to enter into further particulars of the examination of subordinates, whether smugglers or their allies. The case for the prosecution was clear enough; but when Mr. Gay was called, his friends began to tremble for the defence.

The brain of the counsel had a temporary rest, for astute questions and cunningly-devised cross-questions were needless.

He anticipated them by the plain truth, even while awaiting them. He said he was there, not only on his own account, but in the place of his absent son. He did not

wish to elude justice for either, nor to cast all the blame upon Captain Dangerfield, which Mark probably deserved to share. He would rather pay what was just to his uttermost farthing than cheat his neighbour; and he supposed the Board of Trade was his neighbour—at any rate, the Sandport Custom House was. He disclaimed smuggling in his own person, but declared that whereinsoever his men were found guilty the merited penalty should be paid. If they had been drawn into evil courses by him or his, they and he must suffer for it.

"The innocent for the guilty?" asked the counsel for the defence, ironically.

"No, sir," was the reply. "Though you and I owe our salvation to that vicarious atonement. But if my son has run away from his responsibilities, I hold myself his representative. I will bear the punishment of his crime."

There was a murmur of applause all through the court as Mr. Gay spoke these words, clearly and plainly. It had scarcely subsided when a commotion was caused by some man at the bottom of the room, who forced his way through the crowd to the witness-box, in spite of all attempts at restraint.

"I am here, father, to answer for myself!" cried a hoarse voice, which made Mr. Gay start.

"Mark! Mark!" exclaimed Jerusha and Miss Martha, simultaneously.

Yes, it was Mark. Eager, breathless, travel-soiled, as on his wedding-day, he stood before judge and jury, relatives and friends. Grasping his father's hand, he said,

"I couldn't come before. I've only this moment landed. How—how is Janey?"

Mr. Gay's answer was interrupted by a call to order and silence, and Mark, not knowing whether he did right or wrong, scrambled into the witness-box, and stood beside his father. The call to silence was without effect on him, for he said, so that all could hear him,

"I am Mark Gay, and am come to declare that my father never smuggled in his life. If anyone is to blame at Beachton Mill, it is I, and I surrender myself."

And again the call to order was drowned in involuntary but universal applause.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PRODIGAL'S WELCOME HOME.

WHILST the exciting events just related were happening, there was a strange calm at Beachton. It was, indeed, almost a deserted village. Nothing was heard at the mill save the waterfall, the sea, and the sounds of animal life. The house seemed silent, for Janey, Mrs. Firman, and the nurse were the only persons left behind, and they scarcely spoke or moved. The two former were in the sick-chamber, the latter dozing in the hall.

It was a bright April day, and Janey's

window was open. As she lay, white and passive on her bed, the fresh Spring-breezes wafted about her the perfume of the wall-flower, while the melody of black-birds and thrushes also penetrated. But neither sound nor silence recalled Janey to any interest in the outward world.

Her mother had been compelled to leave her on account of the illness of her other children, but the parting had only caused a passing pang, and the tears once wiped away had left no apparent trace. It was deemed advisable to tell her of the trial, in the hope of rousing her; but the only effect it had was to terrify her, lest Mark should be there. She was, however, overcome when Jerusha went to take leave of her, before she and her friends took their departure for the county town.

"Perhaps you will never come back

again, like Mark," she had said, and this idea had remained on her mind, in spite of Jerusha's assurance that they would all return that night.

Mrs. Firman had volunteered to stay with her instead of Miss Martha, who could not yet accommodate herself to Janey's "vagaries," as she called her wanderings, and who also desired to accompany and support Jerusha. No one knew better than Mrs. Firman herself the responsibility of what she undertook, for she realised by what a very frail tenure Janey held the thread of life. While she sat near her, with her delicate white wool in her hand, she took note of her every movement and change of countenance, and seemed to know, intuitively, when to administer food or medicine.

Much to her surprise, Janey began a conversation.

"Do you think I shall die before Mark comes home?" she asked. "He has been away months—or is it years? I cannot remember time. But Rushy says our 'times are in God's hands,' and I try not to be anxious."

"My dear child, I hope you will recover to meet Mark," replied Mrs. Firman, surprised at so coherent a sentence.

"If he comes soon; if not, I think I shall die. But Rushy says that if we trust in Jesus Christ we shall meet in heaven."

Janey folded her hands, and looked upwards, while Mrs. Firman's work dropped, for she feared that this unusual clearness of vision and expression portended some change.

"You are fond of your sister-in-law?" she said, to test whether the mind were of this or another world.

"Yes. Are not you? Everybody loves Rushy. I think it is because she forgets herself, and tries to keep her temper. I wish I were like her. If Mark comes back I think I shall be a good wife to him. I will try. But I hope he will not return till the trial is over. They may put him in prison, and then I shall never, never see him again!"

She little knew how near the truth she was; but the idea recalled the excitement of her brain, and Mrs. Firman could not calm it. At last she asked if she should read to her, and receiving an affirmative answer, she inquired what book.

"The Bible. About the prodigal son. Only I hope Mark will not eat the husks with the swine, though I think he will say 'I will arise, and go to my father,' and then I shall see him, for he is sure to come here

first. Do you think he will be angry with me for being in Rushy's room, instead of the spare room where the white owl hoots? If only you would let me go there! I can walk a little now, and will try to forget the owl."

She raised herself in bed with difficulty, but sank back again from pain and weakness.

"What is that about 'patience,' that Rushy says to me?" she asked, with the old bewildered look. "I wish she would come back. Were you ever ill and impatient like me, Mrs. Firman? Did you ever long for some one who never came? Did your husband ever leave you, promising to come back? I wish I knew of some one who has suffered like me."

"I have," said Mrs. Firman, quietly, placing Jerusha's Bible before her on the table,

and fixing her eyes on Janey. "There is nothing that you have suffered that I and hundreds of other women have not suffered also. Now shall I read to you?"

Janey returned Mrs. Firman's gaze with one of wonder. Her eyes dilated with a sort of pleasure, for she, like many another, believed her own trial the hardest ever borne. But she had soon forgotten her friend's admission, and began again to cry for Mark.

Mrs. Firman, turning over the leaves of the Bible, and seeing Jerusha's name and certain marks she had made in it, found herself wondering at the unselfish patience she had shown her sister-in-law; but when she glanced casually at the texts which Jerusha lined, she wondered no more.

She found the parable of the Prodigal Son, which had been read to Janey almost

daily at her own request, and began to read it in a low voice. It was strange that, although Janey exonerated Mark from all blame, she was frequently heard to repeat the words, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy Son."

Mrs. Firman's voice was monotonous, whereas Rushy's changed with every feeling. Janey was sensible of this, and occasionally accented the reader's words. This she did, especially when she came to "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." She repeated the sentence, with the comment, "That is how Rushy reads it," and shortly afterwards fell asleep.

She did not awake until towards evening, and then, with the strange alternation of fever and nerves, she was excited. Mrs. Firman was obliged to call the nurse to

restrain her from leaving her bed in search of Mark. The nurse declared that she was fit only for a lunatic asylum, and Mrs. Firman, also a nurse, feared her mind was going, if not gone.

"Hush! What is that?" she cried, releasing herself from their grasp, and suddenly springing out of bed, to their astonishment and alarm.

"Only the rooks cawing themselves to sleep," replied Mrs. Firman, taking hold of her, for she had never stood unaided before since her fever.

But she stood now, with her arm extended, and her eyes strained, as if she heard or saw something of which the others were not conscious. The song-birds were chanting their vespers in the distant woods, and the waterfall was murmuring its lullaby. Nothing else was audible at the moment. Yet

her ears had caught some other sound. Was she asleep or awake? mad or sane?

In a few moments the clatter of a horse's hoofs was heard in the yard beneath the window. She staggered towards it, and looked out. She uttered one shrill shriek that the rider must have heard, and fell back into Mrs. Firman's arms.

"It is all over; she is dead!" exclaimed the nurse. "It was her death-call."

While the words were yet on her lips, Mark rushed into the room, and stood, pale, haggard, breathless, before his wounded dove.

"Give her to me—I am her husband," he cried, and took her into his arms, the women yielding her.

He trembled so that he could scarcely support his light burden, but he pressed the insensible form to his heart with all the

fervour of maddening self-reproach, and gazed on the white face like one stupefied. The glow of sunset that at the moment flooded the room, and fell on the impassive features, failed to give even the slightest tinge to the marble.

Suddenly Mark remembered the night when he had encountered her in the moon-lit passage, and she had swooned in his arms. She was as white and death-like then as now.

"She is not dead. I have seen her so before. Leave us alone together," he cried.

"It is life or death," whispered Mrs. Firman, and motioned the nurse from the room.

Who shall describe what followed?—the agonised kisses, the heart-rending prayers.

"My love, my own, my Janey—it is I, Mark! Look at me, my darling! I will

never leave you again. Janey, Janey, speak to me! Say you are not dead. My God, restore her to life, to me. Janey! Janey! It is I, Mark!"

The appeal pierced to the dull ears; the tears moistened the thin cheeks; the kisses awakened the silent heart. Janey's eyes unclosed, and she saw her husband. She gasped for a word that came not, and then the eyes closed again. He laid her on the bed, and called madly for the women, who were only in the passage.

"She lives! Help me, for God's sake!" he cried, and then fell on his knees beside the impassive form.

None but the Divine Intercessor could tell what were the penitence and prayers of his heart during the few succeeding agonised moments.

"Mark!" murmured Janey, as the eyes

opened once more, and fell on the bowed head.

"Here, my own! my love!" he cried, starting up, and bending over the white face.

"Mark! Mark!" she repeated, in bewildered ecstasy, and cast her arms about him.

"Come away; it will kill her. Leave her to me," whispered Mrs. Firman.

But Mark could not have withdrawn himself if he would. So tenacious was the clasp that the nurse said it was the death-grasp. Indeed, he scarcely knew whether the soul were not leaving the body while he was still face to face with that cold, pale, frail tenement. His agony of remorse who shall tell?

While he was thus imprisoned in those slender yet unyielding arms, shouts were resounding through the pastures without, as

a procession, almost triumphal, wound down the road and across the fields towards the mill. All Beachton and half Woolleysheep-fold were escorting Mr. Gay back to his home. No entreaties on his and his daughter's part could stay the uproar caused by his return, acquitted of all personal misdemeanour. They ignored Mark, they forgot the smugglers, they only remembered that their friend and benefactor, the honest, generous, just, and upright miller of Beachton, had been acknowledged publicly all they knew him to be. They did not pause to consider the penalties he had paid, and must still pay, for the faults of others—he was free from all reproach. Magistrates, professional men, tradesmen, farmers, peasants, coastguardsmen even, had united to testify to his righteous life; and if he were penniless he would still live amongst

them to aid them by counsel and good example, if by nothing else; therefore they shouted,

"Long live Mr. Gay! God bless Mr. Gay!"

The rector, the curate, Miss Martha, Captain Bowles, Lieutenant Firman, all swelled the throng that surrounded the miller and his daughter as they drove homewards. Some in carriages, some on horseback, others on foot, accompanied him "they delighted to honour." A golden sunset spread over the horizon that bounded the ocean, and was caught by the hilarious Spring waves, reflected by the gorse-clad hills, thrown back by the glowing woods with their myriads of tuneful tenants, and worn as a wondrous garment by the meads, already adorned with their many-coloured top-knots of kingcups, buttercups, daisies,

cuckoo-flowers, and cowslips. The streamlet danced, and the waterfall shouted for joy; while the mill lay like a gilded nest in the heart of this exuberant nature.

Jerusha sat beside her father, all tears and smiles, yet trembling for Janey. As they approached the house she saw under the porch a figure motioning to them. It was Mrs. Firman. Her son ran forward to meet her, and returned with an imperative command for silence. There was a sudden hush at his voice, accustomed to be obeyed. The hearts of the miller and his daughter smote them as they were met by Mrs. Firman, with grave face and her finger on her lips.

Jerusha ran past her, unmindful of the friends by whom she was surrounded, and was at the door of Janey's room almost instantly. Here she was met by the nurse,

with a solemn "Hush!" but she stole past her and entered. All was silent as death, yet there she saw Mark and Janey clasped in one another's arms. She approached in sudden terror, and, gazing nearer, believed that the shock of the meeting had killed Janey.

CHAPTER XV.

MARK'S REPENTANCE.

"JANEY, Mark is safe. He will never leave you again. If you hold him so tight you will hurt him," said Jerusha, placing her lips close to the poor wife's ear, after contemplating her and Mark in terrified silence.

Slowly the tenacious fingers loosened, and Rushy knew that Janey was not dead. She bade Mark withdraw a little, while she administered some restorative; and as he did so, Janey's eyes once more opened, and she called him by name. He knelt by her

side, and took her wasted hand in his. Again her fingers closed as tightly as before; but she was conscious of his presence, and there was still hope.

Rushy's remedy took effect, and she revived after a long silent interval, during which Mr. Gay came in. When she was satisfied that Mark had really come back, and was by her side, her excitement returned, and he became conscious of what misery his faults had caused.

She talked incoherently of the Prodigal Son, the white owl, and The Bluffs; and entreated forgiveness for having disobeyed Mark in leaving their home, and in not tenanting the chamber near which the owl hooted.

He held her in his arms to re-assure her, and spoke words of hope and comfort that he scarcely believed in himself—for he had

suffered adversity, and was not the careless, selfish young man of a few months back, and the prayers of his father and sister had not been in vain. But still his poor wife's mind wandered deliriously.

By degrees the excitement in and about the mill subsided. The friends who had escorted Mr. Gay home dispersed, leaving only Miss Martha behind, who remained with Mrs. Firman to hear something of Janey. The lieutenant also might have been seen without, dawdling, contrary to his custom, in the hope of catching sight of Jerusha.

It was but natural that the two ladies should discuss the events of the day, and Miss Martha gave the details of the trial, in which she enlarged on her favourite Rushy's sensible evidence, and what she called the "dogged truthfulness" of the

miller. She also admitted that "my son Frank" had been consistently considerate. When she reached the point of Mark's sudden appearance, Mrs. Firman permitted herself to show surprise, and even emotion. Indeed, that lady had lost much of her self-possession since her relationship to Captain Bowles had been made known.

Miss Martha described how that Mr. Gay had broken forth into words of thanksgiving when Mark appeared in court, and that he had embraced him before judge and jury. Then she said that Mark had been sworn, and had made short work of his evidence, taking upon himself the concealment of Captain Dangerfield, but positively denying having aided or abetted in hiding smuggled goods in or about the mill. When cross-questioned, it came out that he had been several voyages with the Captain, and had

assisted him in disposing of his cargoes in the cave and otherwise; but his examination went to prove that he had been a reckless, wild young man, of whom the daring and wily smuggler had taken advantage for his own purposes. Nevertheless, Mark had been a smuggler, and had led others into the trade who, but for him, would have been free of it.

Thanks to the reticence of the other witnesses as regarded him, and his absence during the space of time between Captain Dangerfield's capture and the trial, no positive or visible facts were brought against Mark, and judge and jury had been evidently kindly disposed towards him. As Miss Martha said, his youth, and the high character borne by his father, and that father's family for many generations, had been in his favour.

But Miss Martha forbore to state the actual penalty that Mark, or Mr. Gay for him, was to pay for his misdemeanours. His sentence had been the ordinary one in such cases: a fine of one hundred pounds, or six months' imprisonment, and this was accompanied by a salutary if severe admonition from the judge.

The sentences upon the other smugglers were various in kind and degree. Captain Dangerfield's was a twelve months' imprisonment, without the option of a fine, and it would have been more severe but for the efforts made by Mr. Gay in procuring him counsel. Of course, the *Sea Serpent* and the goods found in the cave had become Crown property. The men who had been taken prisoners with him were sentenced to heavy fines, or service for a twelvemonth in the merchant service or the royal navy.

Levi and Chivers—landsman and fisherman —were made examples of for the many, and were sentenced to a fine of, the one ten, the other five, pounds, or to submit to three months' hard labour.

Before leaving the court Mr. Gay, through his friend Mr. Worthington, declared his intention of defraying the fines laid on his son, Levi, and Chivers, as well as the costs of the trial as far as they were concerned, and these, Miss Martha knew, would be considerable, therefore she merely informed Mrs. Firman that the wealthy miller had undertaken all liabilities.

"And more fool he!" she wound up with. "Though I suppose everybody don't agree with me, or they wouldn't have made such a fuss over him. He might have been a king for that much, and Rushy a princess of the blood royal. But, after all, every

honest man's a king, and a pretty, clever, good girl, like Rushy, is a nat'ral princess." With which sentiment Miss Martha concluded her narrative.

Shortly afterwards Mr. Gay joined them. His eyes were red with weeping, and he could scarcely speak for emotion.

"Rushy says you had better just go up and see her, Cousin Martha, in case she shouldn't wear through the night," he said, then added to Mrs. Firman, "We owe you many thanks, ma'am, for your kind nursing. We cannot hope to repay you; but, at least, we will do nothing to offend you."

Miss Martha left the room, and Mr. Gay walked to the window to hide his tears. Thence he saw Firman without, watching, and went to ask him in. Frank was too much pre-occupied to notice his mother's presence.

"How is she, and Mark, and Rushy? I

want to know before I leave," he said.

"Janey is in the Lord's hands, and I think she may be spared to us. Mark is soothing her by degrees like a child. I lost sight of him when we left the court, but he had taken Solomon Hasluck's horse, and ridden off like mad, so he was home before us. I pray that the shock of his coming may not hasten the end, if she is to be taken, for that would be another sting in my boy's conscience, and I see that he is pricked already, thank God. As to my Rushy, she is brisk in her duty, and I think, with our dear Lord's help, she always will be. This has been a wonderful day for us all—a day of trials and blessings. I should like to end it by making another crooked turning straight."

Mr. Gay paused, and looked from Frank to his mother. It was nearly dark, and she was seated by the fire, while the two men

had been standing near the door. Frank saw her for the first time, and went towards her.

"Mother is the best nurse in the world, Mr. Gay," he said, laying his hand affectionately on her shoulder. "And Mr. Gay is the best man in the world, mother. I am thankful for knowing him. I wish you had been with us when we escorted him home."

"Take care, young friend," said the miller. "My Rushy, who would be reading all day but for other duties, says there is some old writer who remarks that we have all a tinder-box in our bosoms so full of tinder that a spark kindles a full flame of vanity. I find to-day that I am still provided with the burnt rag, so don't strike the flint. To be sure, I have come home to have the blaze put out. And this brings me to what

I want to say. This smuggling business has not only stained our clean name but will nearly ruin me. All my savings are gone, and I am not sure if I can keep the mill. Perhaps I may by selling The Bluffs. Anyhow, 'I was rich, and now am poor.' I don't mind this for my own sake or Mark's, since he will now be obliged to work; but I shall not be able to give Rushy a portion, or Janey a separate home."

"They will not want either," interrupted Firman, impetuously, "for when Rushy and I marry, Janey must be your housekeeper."

"Not so fast," resumed Mr. Gay, with a shake in his voice. "I am as much set against my Rushy marrying while this slur is put upon us as she is herself, and neither of us would care to go penniless and stockless into another man's house. Besides, we would never thrust ourselves where we are

not wanted, and what may be joy to young blood like yours, may be grief to Madam Firman. That would be an ill return for her kindness in nursing Janey."

"It cannot signify to mother now," said the lieutenant; "she will have a comfortable home with my new uncle, who is papering and painting as if he were preparing for a bride."

"Poor Cousin Martha," laughed the miller; "this 'Spring cleaning' would have been for her if she had made more haste, and now madam will have it all her own way. The Cap'en's a kind-hearted man, but hasty."

"You see you have cut out Miss Martha, mother, and I have cut out Rushy," said Frank Firman.

But his mother sat mute in the firelight. At best it was difficult to read her mind

through her face; it was impossible in that obscurity. Still, while this conversation was proceeding, her own past life was passing before her. The review told in Rushy's favour, for it showed how good and pure she was compared with what, in her youth, she had herself been. But if she intended to make any concession, it was prevented by Mr. Gay, who, resuming his gravity of manner, said that it was no time to talk of "marrying and giving in marriage," when Janey was perhaps dying upstairs.

Miss Martha also returned at that moment, and asked Mrs. Firman if she would go up and try to quiet Janey, while Mark, who was quite exhausted, left her awhile.

She did so, and Mark shortly after came down, saying that Mrs. Firman and Jerusha had persuaded Janey to let him take some refreshment. He evidently needed it, and

Miss Martha and Tilly soon prepared it for him.

He was so much overcome that he leaned his head upon the table and sobbed. Firman withdrew, and left him and his father alone together.

It was a solemn and pathetic scene. Mr. Gay stood over him a moment with eyes and hands upraised, silently praying that present grief might work "repentance not to be repented of." Then he laid his hands on his son's head, and tenderly blessed him. His voice proved the love of his heart, and when Mark heard it he rose and fell upon his neck, even as the prodigal of old.

No words came, and none were needed; but in that moment Mark made a vow, registered in heaven, that he would henceforth lead a new life.

The latter portion of the old life was soon

narrated. It had happened as Captain Dangerfield had said. When they were rowed from the cave to the smuggling vessel it had not been considered safe for Mark to return to land that day. Signals from the coast continually warned of danger, and he and Job Tuck remained on board, while the other fishermen rowed the boat to a distance. Other signals informed them of Captain Dangerfield's capture, and the smuggling vessel, bound for America, weighed anchor with Mark and Job on board. It had been impossible for Mark to write home, for the smuggling craft was a good deal harassed. No sooner did they land in America, however, than he and Job offered themselves as common sailors to a steamer on the eve of departing for England. They thus worked their passage home, and landed at Sandport on the morning of the trial.

Mark was soon informed of all that was passing, by an old acquaintance, and, instead of starting for Beachton, took the train to the county town. The rest has been related.

But, in the excitement, Mark's haggard face and shabby dress had been scarcely noticed. As he sat at table, however, striving to eat to please his friends, they were apparent enough. His father and Miss Martha glanced pityingly at one another, thinking not only of him, but of Janey, and Miss Martha said, with a gravity remarkable in her, "Well, Mark, I think we've all had enough of trying to cheat the revenue."

So thought Mark, as the past rose in review before his mind, and the present grew clear during that mental process. In return for a few brief years of sinful excitement and what had promised to be un-

lawful gain, he was a ruined man himself, and had, as he knew better than anyone else, ruined his father. Had he lived even half a century earlier, he would have been hanged for what had seemed to him little more than amusement. As it was now, he had brought insanity, apparently, upon his young wife, an evil report on himself, and sorrow on his father and sister.

He knew best what his liabilities were, and it may be as well to say here that Mr. Gay had not, as yet, discovered them all, even though he had either paid, or promised to pay, every farthing he owed. He and Dangerfield together, in their unlawful partnership, had bills abroad as well as at home, which must, he was aware, reach him in due time. While resolving to conceal nothing from his father, he trembled to think of what was even yet to come, and of the

probability that they might all be turned adrift together to begin life anew.

It was no wonder that he hung his head dejectedly, and sat in silence amongst those who had so fondly welcomed him, the prodigal, home.

CHAPTER XVI.

"THIS TIME NEXT YEAR."

THE mill-wheel was busy again, and the miller was happy. The hawthorn-trees round about the pond were in full blossom, and the sward beneath was aglow with blue-bells. The May-balls in Jerusha's garden gleamed round and white from amongst their leaves, and purple and white lilacs were in flower. Showers of golden-chains fell both in garden and wood-walk, and, turn where she would, joyous Rushy was crowned "Queen of the May." Yes, joyous once more, for Janey was mending as

rapidly as she fell sick; Mark was repenting, working, watching, and waiting with a will; Levi and Tilly were engaged to be married; and, above all, Mr. Gay was continually singing a hymn of praise. Therefore was she joyous.

It was evening, and the day's work was done. She had taken a book, and sought her favourite seat beneath the trees near the pond, close to the spot where her swans nested. It was the first real leisure she had enjoyed since Mark's return, and she had longed for solitude to think over the past troubled months. Nature had framed the rustic seat she occupied, and Nature surrounded her. Above her the trees and hawthorn bushes, in which the birds were singing in choirs, and through which the sunset glinted; on either side the blue-bells, with here and there a patch of

lingering daffodils and primroses, loth to depart, and before her the clear mill-pond, with its feathered tenants. The music of the still slowly-turning wheel and the water-fall, united with the melody of birds and the low of cattle, reached her ears; while deep thoughts of God and man stirred her soul.

The colour had returned to her cheeks, and light and laughter to her eyes; but as she considered the past, and tried to shape the future, gravity restrained the dimples. Had her thoughts been translated into words they would have taken some such form as this:

"Father has paid almost everything, and hopes the mill will be still left to him, and, please God, to Mark after him. If he can let The Bluffs for a long term of years, perhaps that may be also spared; but Mark

can never live in it again. He must work under father, and Janey under me, until they learn milling and housekeeping thoroughly. I am glad that I have got over my dislike of interruption, and I hope that I shall never again mind Janey. How gentle Mark is with her, and she more obedient than ever. It is pretty to see him carrying her like a child, and kissing her so tenderly. Ah me, I hope I am not jealous after all! I am sure I ought to be content with dear father's love, and he is so happy. He says he has never been so happy before since dear mother's death, because Mark is steady and has confessed all his faults and debts, and he has now no money out at interest to disturb his rest. And how he does sleep! Dear, good father! The men all love him better than ever; and as to Levi, and Job, and Chivers, they can't do enough for him.

I am glad Job and Chivers have taken to the mill-work. I wonder how Levi and Tilly will get on when married. They are queer lovers now. He eats, while she talks and scolds. People are so different. Now Janey listens while Mark talks. I wonder what I should do? But I never mean to marry. Yet he is very, *very* constant, and it is hard to be firm; but I cannot leave father or take to his mother. She is quite a grand lady now, as mistress of the Captain's house, and all the people look upon her as something superior. But she isn't half as good a lady as Cousin Martha. Now I am jealous again, and backbiting. How disobedient and ungrateful I am to the good God who has brought us through so many trials! I must try to like her, especially as she is *his* mother, and has been so very kind to Janey. But I sup-

pose we love those best who love us best. Yet not always, for I cannot love poor Cousin Solomon, who really loves me. What a tangled skein life seems! One must break the thread that is tightest twisted. That is what I have done, and *he* hasn't been here since the night of Mark's return."

As Jerusha arrived at this point in her reflections, she fixed her eyes on the clear lake—eyes pure and deep as its water—and something like a tear moistened them. She could collect her thoughts no more. They wandered wilfully over paths she had forbidden them, and found themselves crowding round a young stranger at the garden-gate, then roaming off to some one in uniform helping Mark home, then to a figure at night whispering under her chamber window, and finally to Chivers's cottage,

the sea-shore, and The Bluffs, where these unruly thoughts still pursued the same forbidden object.

"I will not be so foolish," she cried aloud, wiping off the tear, and rising. "I will go in and work."

"Not just yet," said a voice she knew and loved.

Firman was at her side. He had been searching for her, and found her as we have described. He said that he wanted to speak to her particularly, so she re-seated herself, and he placed himself by her side. He was rapid in decision and action, as she knew, and she felt that a fresh temptation awaited her. He soon let her know what it was.

"They have made me a captain, Rushy," he said, "and I want your congratulations first."

"Captain Firman!" she repeated, slowly and ruefully, for she liked the lieutenant best, and fancied he would be changed with his title. "I am very glad, if you are glad."

"I am glad because there can be now no obstacle to my marriage, if only you will change your resolution. My mother gives her consent, and says that so good a daughter and sister——"

"You have forced it from her!" interrupted Rushy. "She would not have changed in one short month of her own accord."

"No; she volunteered it, as I knew she would. I am commissioned by the authorities to ask your father to sell or let The Bluffs as a residence for me, or some other officer, as the new coastguard station is to be between it and Seagull's Nest. Don't

be frightened, you will not see it from the mill. Still, if you really cared for me, you would not mind being rocked by the winds in The Bluffs, which we could make into a splendid sailor's home. And they have given me lots of bounty-money——"

"For taking poor Captain Dangerfield and Levi prisoners and searching our mill, and letting the world know that we are smugglers," again interrupted Rushy. "No; I cannot marry anyone who has done that."

"It was my duty," said Firman, aggrieved.

"And it is my duty to stay with father. If you are obliged to do yours, so am I. The doctor says it will be a year at least before Janey is strong again, and that she needs care. I must be there to see to her, both for her own and Mark's sake. And he needs help to keep him steady, for we cannot turn over a new leaf till we have

quite read through the pages of the old. You must not urge me."

"I must and will. You will be close to them at The Bluffs, and can see them when you like. You cannot mean that you reproach me in your heart, and refuse to marry me because I was placed in the position I was obliged to fill as regarded the smugglers. If you do, you are not the girl I thought you, and we are best apart. You have changed since your father blessed us."

He took her hands, and looked into her eyes; but although he read therein that she did not at heart so reproach him, he perceived that some thoughts, apart from love and marriage, were stirring her soul. She was, in truth, thinking that her father had confided to her that he was not yet sure of keeping the mill from Mark's credit-

ors, since all his savings had gone to Solomon Hasluck and others, and she was wondering with a sudden hope whether the sale of The Bluffs for a coastguard station would enable him to keep the mill, and so set them at comparative ease once more. But she did not consider herself justified in telling even Firman this.

"I know you were not serious in blaming me for simply doing my duty. If you really love me you cannot let such fancies come between us," continued Firman, anxiously.

But she withdrew her hands, and said, reflectively and decidedly, looking at him candidly as she spoke,

"No; I do not believe that you could have acted otherwise. You have been very kind ever since we have known you. I have not changed since—since——and I

don't think I shall ever change; but I cannot leave father, and brother, and Janey yet; and you do not know me well enough. Besides, there are other obstacles, and I must not be hasty. It has been almost as quick as Mark and Janey, and that did not turn out well; at least, it has not so far; and who can tell if Mark's patience will last through a whole year's sickness—would yours?"

"Try me!" he replied, and smiled.

"I will, so that we may be quite sure of one another, and that things may settle down a little. If you are not changed in twelve months, and if father is happy with Mark and Janey, and if his affairs get more prosperous, and if I can make your mother love me for myself, then——" she paused.

"If those 'ifs' are not fulfilled, what then?" he asked.

"I cannot look beyond a year, and that seems very long," she replied, plucking at a protruding flower.

"And I cannot look so far, because women are often false and men fickle," he said, warmly.

"If I prove false, you surely will not want me; and if you are fickle, why then—then——"

Arriving at this idea, Rushy was so confused that she turned her head away.

"Although I am a sailor, I don't think I am fickle, Rushy. But a year is a long time. Three hundred and sixty-five days; and who knows but I may be moved away, and that something or some one may come between us?"

She turned quickly towards him, a tear and a smile in her bright eyes.

"Then we should know if our constancy

be of the gold tried in the fire, or the dross unfit for use. You have been as hasty as brother. You will know me better by next May. Summer, Autumn, Winter, only three short seasons, and then Spring—and then——"

Once more Jerusha paused, and he took up the thread. He pleaded while the sunset deepened and the flowers began to close their eyes for slumber, while the nightingales commenced their wonderful song, and the stars came forth to listen, while the sea, the brook, the fall, murmured a continuous love-song.

Still Jerusha was firm. If he was still constant when another Spring came round, and the hawthorn budded again, and the nightingales once more returned from foreign shores, she would—yes—she would—marry him.

"This time next year, God willing," she said gaily, as he walked with her round the shadowy mill-pond back to the house.

CHAPTER XVII.

A LOVER'S WALK.

IN after-times Jerusha was known to say that this self-imposed probation was the longest year she had ever spent. But neither she nor Firman regretted it when it was over.

Before its close a new inmate came to Beachton Mill in the shape of a tiny, delicate infant. The miller's pretty, pale Janey had a baby as pale as herself—a boy so delicate to rear, and consequently so anxiously nursed, that father, mother, grandsire, and aunt were all devoted to him. This was

the most salutary of all Janey's lessons, for it mysteriously taught her that there were others to care for and work for besides her husband; and it roused her from a morbid terror lest he should again leave her, into a certainty that this new tie would bind him firmly to her and his home.

Indeed, Mark showed no desire to rove again. An intense gratitude towards his father filled his heart, so that he threw all his energy into the mill, and his ambition into striving to redeem some of the fortune he had lost. But all his efforts would have been in vain, had not Government made Mr. Gay a handsome offer for the old dairy-house, or The Bluffs, as it was ever afterwards called. This, his former abode, was thankfully sold by his father, and if, at any time, Mark grew careless or presumptuous, he had only to glance across the mill-yard,

at the new coastguard station, to feel a "thorn in his side," which, painfully pricking his conscience, reminded him of his misdemeanours. Shame at the past also helped to keep him humble, and when the sale was completed, and the last liability cleared off, he really was a much altered and sobered man.

"After all, I don't think any of you will miss me," said Jerusha one day, with a sigh, as she stood in the parlour window, contemplating a family group.

Janey had come downstairs for the first time, and was seated on the sofa, with her baby in her lap. Mr. Gay and Mark were leaning over the white blossom, and Miss Martha was near them, striving not to feel interested in her grand-nephew. They all looked from the new to the old treasure.

"Jealous again, my little lass!" said the

miller, with a hearty laugh. "We have no need to miss thee, for, under God, thou hast saved our pretty Janey, and taught her to take thy place."

"I will try; but no one could make up for Rushy," said Janey, while Mark went to his sister, and put his arm round her waist.

"I should think not!" exclaimed Miss Martha; "and she's a simpleton to get married at all."

"I cannot endorse that sentiment, for this is the first of May," said a voice that brought the colour to Jerusha's cheeks.

Frank Firman entered, followed by his uncle.

"Let's have a spy at the young miller," exclaimed the Captain. "He don't look as if he'd ever carry a sack of flour."

"He grows stronger and fatter every day," said Janey, offended.

"They don't want us, my Rushy," whispered Frank. "Let us go maying. You see your work is done; and the children were dancing on the village-green as we came by."

They slipped out, Miss Martha shouting after them,

"What! you going turtle-doving? Then Martha Hasluck is the only woman left with her wits about her."

Frank took Jerusha for a long walk. First of all they paid a visit to The Bluffs, which was to be their home. He had not yet left Muchsandy, but intended to do so when he had obtained Jerusha's final consent. The new rooms, contemplated for Mark, had been added for Firman by the authorities of the coastguard, and Mr. Gay had secretly expressed his intention of giving him and his daughter such of the furniture

as Janey did not care to move to the mill, Captain Bowles having asked to be allowed to provide what more was required.

"It will be all ready by the end of the month, my Rushy," said Frank, as they stood in the bay-window of the new parlour, gazing down upon the rocks and waves below. "I hear the original dairy-room is to be restored, and we are actually to have two cows of our very own. Your good father has done this."

"It was my mother's pride," returned Rushy, simply.

The house promised to be very comfortable and pretty, and as they wandered from room to room, Jerusha looked as bright and happy as even Firman could desire.

It was now made quite separate from the mill by a high wall round the court, and Mr. Gay had sacrificed a portion of his land

for a garden, while the cows were to have the run of his pastures.

When the lovers left The Bluffs, they wandered up Mushroom Bank. The new coastguard station, which was quite removed from the house, was nearly complete, and already seemed on the look-out for contrabandists.

"How ugly it is! Why do they blacken the houses?" asked Rushy. "They disfigure my sweet bank."

"To protect them against the weather. But for my appointment I should never have seen my Rushy, so the black-tarred dwellings look pleasant to me, and I have to thank the darkness for the sunshine."

They then made a short cut across the downs to Woolleysheepfold. The cuckoo's call and the lark's song accompanied them. Arrived there they found the joyous chil-

dren on the village-green dancing and shouting to welcome "the merrie month of May." Greetings and good wishes followed them as they proceeded through the straggling, picturesque, tree-embosomed village to Lambswool Cottage.

They passed, arm-in-arm, through the green gate and trim shrubbery to the rustic verandah that surrounded the house. Everything was clean as a ship's deck. A tap at one of the windows, and the word "Mother" startled Mrs. Firman, who was at her work within. She met them at the door with the greeting,

"My dear children, I am glad to see you."

The warm kiss she gave Rushy told its own tale. The young girl had not persevered in her efforts to win the older woman's love in vain.

The trio passed into the comfortable sitting-room, smartened up by Captain Bowles for his sister, where a model of his old ship adorned the side-table, and marine pictures and charts the walls. Here Frank told his mother that he had at last conquered Rushy, who had promised to marry him before the month was out. Mrs. Firman held out her hand to Jerusha, who blushed as she laid hers in it. She mutely acknowledged that she had found a daughter worthy of her son. The silent, observant woman had not watched the young girl so narrowly unintentionally.

"You are happy with my uncle, mother?" asked Frank.

"We get on comfortably together. Miss Hasluck might have suited him better, but I do my best," she replied, vaguely.

"But Cousin Martha wouldn't have him.

I know he asked her more than once," exclaimed truthful Rushy, which consoled the widow, though her life was still fulfilled only in her son's.

"You must wear a coloured gown on the happy day, mother. I shall give it you, for I have lots of money," said Frank.

"Won through the poor smugglers, if not through his own smuggling," remarked Jerusha. "I wonder what has become of Captain Dangerfield?"

This question was soon to be answered. When she and Frank returned to the mill they found an addition to the party they had left. In the easiest of the not very easy chairs, sat a thin, worn, shabby, one-armed stranger, with Jancy's baby laid carefully across his knees, and Mark by his side, holding the child for safety. It was Captain Dangerfield. He had been some few weeks

released from prison, and had wandered, forlorn and friendless, to the mill, in the hope of receiving forgiveness, if not sympathy. He had found both.

His dark, hollow eyes lighted up when he saw Jerusha, and heard her surprised but kindly welcome. No one alluded to the past, save himself, and that only casually; and no one ever knew what he felt or had suffered, not even Mark.

"Hasluck did not buy the old Grange after all, and nobody else would," he said casually, during the course of the evening. "I shall end my days in the warren, and then leave it to you, Mark, and your boy. A poor payment for what I have cost you all. May I come and see you sometimes, Mr. Gay? You are the only friend I ever had in my life, and indeed you have been as true as I have been undeserving."

"There's a seat in the chimney-corner for you whenever you choose," returned the miller. "If we lose our Rushy, pretty Janey will bid you welcome."

"And I am sure Rushy will," said Frank Firman. "A sailor will always find a hammock in a sailor's cabin."

The Captain sighed heavily.

"And we'll have a jolly time of it," cried Mark, whose spirits rose at sight of the familiar face, and who was vigorously rocking his baby. "Why shouldn't you be godfather? You, and father, and Rushy would help one another, and spoil the young heir to the Grange at the same time."

"Oh do, Captain Dangerfield!" said Janey, still her husband's echo.

"I! A smuggler!" muttered the Captain.

"We have gone on the wrong tack toge-

ther, let us shift and go right," said Mark. "Never too late to mend; is it, father?"

"Certainly not, God helping us," replied Mr. Gay.

CONCLUSION.

THE BEST MAN.

WHEN it was formally announced that the wedding-day was fixed for the 1st of June, Tilly came boldly forward with a request. She wished to be married on the same day as her young mistress. Levi had secured a cottage belonging to Miss Martha, and their prospects were not bad, so Jerusha had nothing for it but to consent.

"I don't know what father will do without us both," she said.

"There's that Miary out o' pliace. Her'll

do a zight better vor Mrs. Mark nor I, an' her'll be steady when Levi's got me to zee to 'un. Thay men doan't care how many maids they goo a'ter. I dessay your zwitheart be the ziame, miss, down Muchzandy way."

"Indeed he is not, Tilly!" cried Jerusha, offended.

But Tilly gained her point about her wedding, and Mary was speedily hired to fill her place.

Events always thicken before a wedding, and Jerusha's was not an exceptional one. Its announcement brought Solomon Hasluck to Beachton. It was satisfactory, if unflattering, to kind-hearted Rushy to perceive that, if he had lost hope, he had neither lost flesh nor appetite. But then Solomon was a philosopher. He had recovered from the payment of that undeserved fine of one hundred pounds, and had been repaid his

loans to Mark, and all else was small by comparison.

"I wish to see Jerusha alone," he said to Mr. Gay on his arrival, and, much to her annoyance, she felt she must grant the interview.

He found her at work in the identical window-seat that had witnessed his first proposal, and he sat down near her.

"So you are going to be married, my dear," he began, with his usual slowness. "Better have had me, though you have chosen a respectable young man enough. Not much money and no land though. I've plenty of both, and furniture and plate, as you know."

"Yes, Cousin Solomon. Many women would be glad of such an establishment. I hope you will marry," said Rushy.

"Not at present; I shall wait. Accidents

happen——and then you may change your mind. Life is uncertain in the coastguard service."

Jerusha's work fell from her hand, She looked to see if he was in jest or in earnest. He was perfectly serious. He was calculating the chances of Frank's either tumbling over the cliffs or receiving a stray shot from a smuggler. She burst out laughing, and he also chuckled.

"Glad to see you merry, my dear, and since 'man is born to disappointment,' I'll try to follow your example. Next to marrying oneself is being best man. Indeed, sometimes the best man is best off, though not in your instance, my dear. I wish to be your best man."

"I think the best man belongs to the—the—bridegroom," said Jerusha, blushing in her astonishment.

"You ask him. He won't repent. I'm a cousin, you know. And I hear you're to stand for Mark's child. Well! Thanks to him and the smugglers, your father isn't so rich as he was by a deal—and they cost *me* a few hundreds—so I've brought you a silver tankard for a present for the baby. Don't know what to do with all my tankards."

Solomon drew from his pocket a large silk handkerchief, out of which he took the said tankard. His face was lugubrious, his manner solemn. As Jerusha said afterwards it was more like a funeral than a christening or a wedding. Nevertheless, she started up with the exclamation,

"Oh, Cousin Solomon, what a beauty! They will be so proud. How very kind of you!"

"More tankards, and I'll stand for the

next," he said, with imperturbable gravity.

Frank Firman granted Mr. Solomon Hasluck's request, and he was best man at Jerusha's simple but happy wedding. Everybody laughed at the tall, lank, elderly groomsman, in his blue coat, brass buttons, protrusive shirt-frill, and knee-breeches, but since he considered it second best to being bridegroom, nobody grumbled.

As all the young Haslucks were present, and one of them bridesmaid, there was plenty of youth and fun as a set-off, and they pronounced it a much jollier wedding than Janey's; which it certainly was, for everybody was there, and everybody was happy. The church was crammed with spectators, the mill with guests, and Mr. Gay was the central figure in both. If his voice trembled when he gave "his little maid" away, it was firm and joyous when

he did the honours of his hospitable house.

And he performed them with equal courtesy in kitchen and hall—for Levi and Tilly had also their party—only Tilly insisted on waiting on Jerusha's wedding guests before she condescended to her own; enveloping her smart purple gown in a large apron, and tucking her skirts up behind before she did so.

Jerusha and Janey still represented the red and the white rose. The one all blushes, tears, smiles, pathos, and jest—the other all pallor, shyness, timidity. Yet was Janey, as wife and mother, braver and more helpful than before; and as she, aided by watchful Mark, tried to see to the comforts and needs of the wedding party, Miss Martha was heard to exclaim to the miller,

"Why, Janey is quite taking Rushy's place already. You'll make a woman and

housekeeper of her by the time she's sixty. But I shan't live to see it."

"She will soon cut me out," said Rushy, despondently.

"Never. Pretty Janey may be good, but not so good as my little lass," said Mr. Gay, affectionately.

"Nor so clever, unselfish, and pretty," echoed the admiring bridegroom.

"A very remarkable gathering!" exclaimed Captain Bowles to Miss Martha, as they sat side by side. "I shouldn't wonder if money were to flow back to the mill. Here's Gay, the best of us all, as poor as a rat; but here are you and Hasluck as rich as Crœsus, and they say that Dangerfield's improving the old Grange, and going to pay his debts. But he's got a cut-throat look with him still. I wonder the miller wasn't afraid to ask him."

"Martin Gay's a fool for his pains. Everybody takes him in, and he pays everybody's debts," said Miss Martha.

Still, before the happy couple started for their really unclouded honeymoon, Miss Martha was obliged to confess that honest, straightforward dealing is not always "folly," even in a worldly point of view.

Solomon Hasluck drew Jerusha aside, and placed a paper in her hands with the words, "My wedding present, my dear. Show it to your father and your husband. Wish your choice had fallen different, but your sex isn't accountable."

"You mustn't flirt with Rushy now she's Mrs. Firman," said Miss Martha, poking Solomon in the back.

"Only Mrs. Frank Firman as yet," whispered Mrs. Firman to Mrs. Joe Hasluck.

Jerusha took Solomon's paper to her

father, who was talking to Frank near the window that looked out upon the mill-wheel and waterfall.

"Open it, dear father," she said.

He did so, and found that it contained notes to the amount of the exact sum of money that he had paid Solomon Hasluck for Mark's liabilities to him.

Solomon had drawn near them, and was looking on, and Mr. Gay glanced up at him.

"I used to think thee a just man, Cousin Solomon, and now I find thee canst be generous," he said, holding out his hand, which Solomon took gravely. "There, Frank Firman, our Rushy is not without her portion after all."

Mr. Gay put the bundle of notes into Frank's hands, who immediately transferred them to Rushy's. She, scarcely understanding what it meant, looked from one to the

other, her bright eyes full of tears, despite the pretty bridal dress. Solomon laid his large hand over hers and Firman's as they jointly held the packet, and said, looking at Frank first, then at the miller,

"'Tis settled on her. Agreement drawn up yesterday, and if anything happens to Captain Firman, I'm in the same mind still. Now, Cousin Martin, 'Let bygones be bygones."

"With all my heart, Cousin Solomon, and leaving the things which are behind, let us press forward to those which are before," replied the miller.

"Amen," ejaculated Frank and Jerusha, as they stood hand in hand, surrounded by their friends.

THE END.

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